

BENGHAZI REVIEW SENT TO CONGRESS

KIMBERLY DOZIER

MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An independent review board on Tuesday presented to Congress its report on the Sept. 11 attack in Libya that killed a U.S. ambassador and three other Americans, findings the Obama administration hopes will bolster its assertion that diplomats took all reasonable

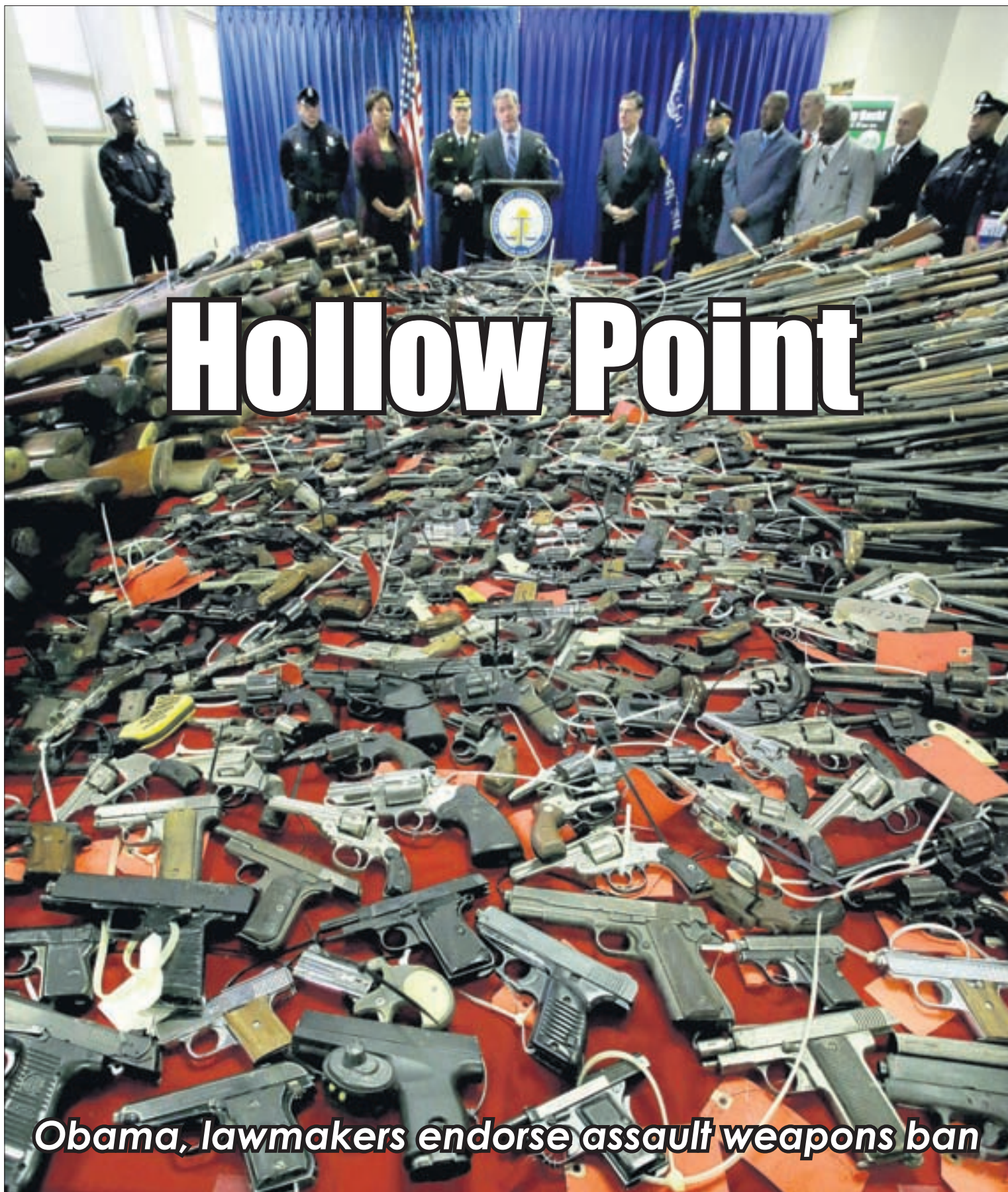


Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, speaks to reporters on Capitol Hill, in Washington. (Stephen Crowley/The New York Times)

measures to anticipate and respond to the violence, and end months of finger-pointing and recriminations over whether the deaths could have been avoided.

Diplomats and intelligence officers alike have spoken about the rising risk in Benghazi and growing debate over how to improve security before the attack, set against Ambassadors Chris Stevens' decision to keep the Benghazi diplomatic post open and even visit there on Sept. 11.

Continued on Page 6



Hollow Point

Obama, lawmakers endorse assault weapons ban

Guns cover tables in front of New Jersey Attorney General Jeffrey Chiesa, center at podium, in Camden, N.J., Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012, as he announces last weekend's gun buyback event brought in more than 1,100 guns. He says it appears that the mass killing at a school in Newtown, Conn., may have motivated some to turn in their weapons for up to \$250 each.

(AP Photo/Mel Evans)

CHARLES J. LEWIS

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WASHINGTON — The Connecticut congressional delegation joined President Obama on Tuesday in endorsing a new federal ban

on assault weapons in the wake of the Newtown school massacre where a 20-year-old man used an assault rifle to murder 20 children and six adults. Obama is "actively sup-

portive" of efforts to reinstate an assault weapons ban, White House spokesman Jay Carney said Tuesday. The president, in his remarks Sunday night at Newtown High School, had

urged unspecified actions to curb the rash of mass shootings, though as a member of the Senate he had supported a ban.

Continued on Page 5

After escaping abduction in Syria, NBC's Engel, crew safe in Turkey

ELIZABETH A. KENNEDY

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — NBC's chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel said Tuesday he and members of his network crew escaped unharmed after five days of captivity in Syria, where more than a dozen pro-regime gunmen dragged them from their car, killed one of their rebel escorts and subjected them to mock executions. Appearing on NBC's "Today" show, an unshaven Engel said he and his team

since March 2011.

"They kept us blindfolded, bound," said the 39-year-old Engel, who speaks and reads Arabic. "We weren't physically beaten or tortured. A lot of psychological torture, threats of being killed. They made us choose which one of us would be shot first and when we refused, there were mock shootings," he added.

"They were talking openly about their loyalty to the government," Engel said. He said the captors were

Lebanese prisoners being held by the rebels.

"They captured us in order to carry out this exchange," he said.

Engel and his crew entered Syria on Thursday and were driving through what they thought was rebel-controlled territory when "a group of gunmen just literally jumped out of the trees and bushes on the side of the road."

"There were probably 15 gunmen. They were wearing ski masks. They were heavily armed. They



NBC chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel, center, NBC Turkey reporter Aziz Akyavas, left, and NBC photographer John Kooistra, right, speak during a news conference in Reyhanli, Turkey, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. (AP Photo/Anatolia)

escaped during a firefight Monday night between their captors and rebels at a checkpoint. They crossed into Turkey on Tuesday.

NBC did not say how many people were kidnapped with Engel, although two other men, producer Ghazi Balkiz and photographer John Kooistra, appeared with him on the "Today" show. It was not confirmed whether everyone was accounted for.

Engel said he believes the kidnappers were a Shiite militia group loyal to the Syrian government, which has lost control over swaths of the country's north and is increasingly on the defensive in a civil war that has killed 40,000 people

trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and allied with Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militant group, but he did not elaborate.

There was no mention of the kidnapping by Syria's state-run news agency. Both Iran and Hezbollah are close allies of the embattled Syrian government of President Bashar Assad, who used military force to crush mostly peaceful protests against his regime. The crackdown on protests led many in Syria to take up arms against the government, and the conflict has become a civil war.

Engel said he was told the kidnappers wanted to exchange him and his crew for four Iranian and two

dragged us out of the car," he said.

He said the gunmen shot and killed at least one of their rebel escorts on the spot and took the hostages into a waiting truck nearby. Around 11 p.m. Monday, Engel said he and the others were being moved to another location in northern Idlib province.

"And as we were moving along the road, the kidnappers came across a rebel checkpoint, something they hadn't expected. We were in the back of what you would think of as a minivan," he said. "The kidnappers saw this checkpoint and started a gunfight with it. Two of the kidnappers were killed."

AROUND THE WORLD

'Plebgate' Minister wants full inquiry

LONDON (AP) — A British politician who resigned from a government post over allegations that he used derogatory remarks against police officers is calling for a full inquiry into the dispute amid new claims that police fabricated the evidence. Andrew Mitchell quit as the government's chief whip in September after he was accused of swearing at police officers who stopped him from wheeling his bicycle through the Downing Street gates. Mitchell admitted swearing, but denied using the word "pleb" — an insulting term for a working-class person. A news program alleged Tuesday that a police officer had falsely claimed to witness the events. □

Israel probes embassy Facebook post

JERUSALEM (AP) — A spokesman says Israel's Foreign Ministry is investigating an anti-Palestinian post on the Facebook page of its embassy in Ireland. The inflammatory post shows an illustration of Jesus and Mary, next to a message the unidentified writer calls "A thought for Christmas." The message read, "If Jesus and mother Mary were alive today, they would, as Jews without security, probably end up being lynched in Bethlehem by hostile Palestinians." Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor says the post was removed and the embassy apologized immediately after the mission received complaints. Palmor said Tuesday, "We all agree that it was improper, inappropriate." □

Mexico: 80 cartels at work in country

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's new attorney general says as many as 80 small to medium drug cartels are operating in the country, a vast rise from the last government assessment. Attorney General Jesus Murillo Karam told MVS Radio Tuesday that officials are working to identify all the country's drug-trafficking organizations, which vary widely in size. The administration of President Enrique Pena Nieto took office on Dec. 1 and officials said Monday that former President Felipe Calderon had fragmented the country's cartels, making them more dangerous, by focusing on the killing and capture of cartel heads. Murillo Karam tells MVS Radio that he calculates 60 to 80 cartels. □

Container ship blamed for minor spill

ORANJESTAD, Aruba (AP) — A container ship that brings essential products to Aruba on a regular basis was blamed Tuesday for a small oil spill in the Dutch Caribbean island, according to authorities. Ports Director Alfonso Boekhoudt said the spill occurred when crews tried to empty the ship's ballast tank, which was filled with oil instead of water. Boekhoudt said cleanup crews prevented the oil from reaching nearby beaches. He said two cruise ships and other boats were affected by the spill that occurred in the island's main harbor. The Southern Bay container ship owned by Belgium-based Seatrade flies under a Monrovia flag and visits Aruba every five weeks. □

Ireland to legislate new abortion laws

DUBLIN (AP) — Ireland's government says it will draft a new law spelling out the right of women to receive abortions in cases where the pregnancy poses a risk to their lives — including from a woman's own threats to commit suicide. For two decades, governments have resisted passing any law in support of a 1992 Supreme Court judgment that such abortions should be legal in Ireland. Catholic conservatives particularly oppose the suicide-threat justification, arguing it could be used to expand access to abortion beyond rare cases where a pregnancy endangers a woman's life. The announcement follows uproar over the October death of a miscarrying woman in an Irish hospital. □

NEW ARRIVALS

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Israel facing further condemnation for settlements

EDITH M. LEDERER
JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

The Palestinians said Tuesday that all of the U.N. Security Council members except the United States will condemn Israel's recent announcements of new settlement construction which are making a two-state solution more difficult to achieve. Palestinian envoy Riyad Mansour said the 14 other council members will tell reporters after the council's monthly Mideast meeting on Wednesday that continuing settlement activity is illegal and must be stopped. The United States delivered a rare blunt rebuke to Israel, its top Mideast ally, on Tuesday for its new settlement construction, but Mansour said the Obama administration won't approve a Security Council resolution or statement. He said there is near global unanimity against Israel's actions, pointing to the 169-6 vote in the General Assembly Tuesday on a non-binding resolution condemning settlement activities by Israel and demanding their immediate cessation. "Unfortunately, one powerful country with veto power does not want the Security Council to act

accordingly," Mansour said. "Therefore, the 14 other countries in the Security Council, in their own creative way, will make their position clear, collectively or separately, to the media outside the chamber on Wednesday."

He said the four West European council members — Germany, France, Britain and Portugal — would issue a statement of condemnation, followed by India speaking on behalf of the Nonaligned Movement of mainly developing countries, and other council members likely including South Africa, Russia and China. "Therefore one can say 14 versus 1 is the reality of the Security Council in condemning Israel settlement activity — although the one is also condemning," Mansour said.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced plans to build thousands of homes in settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem in response to the U.N. General Assembly's decision last month to upgrade the Palestinians' status to a non-member observer state. On Monday, he said Israel will push forward with plans to build 1,500 apartments in east Jerusalem, the Pales-



A construction site in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Sholmo, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. A European diplomat says Germany and three other European members of the U.N. Security Council are preparing a statement condemning Israel's latest settlement plans in the West Bank. (AP Photo/Dan Balilty)

tinians' hoped-for capital. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland accused Israel of engaging in a "pattern of

provocative action" that runs counter to the government's commitment to peace. She said settlement activity only puts the

goal of peace "further at risk" and urged both Israel and the Palestinians to halt all provocations and take steps to revive long-stalled peace talks. Her comments came as the United States grows increasingly frustrated with the Israelis, who continue to announce new settlement activity and take other measures to punish the Palestinians for the U.N. vote recognizing the state of Palestine, despite U.S. calls for restraint. British Foreign Secretary William Hague on Tuesday called all Israeli settlements "illegal under international law." He urged Israel to reverse its latest expansion plan in east Jerusalem, warning that if implemented "it would make a negotiated two-state solution, with Jerusalem as a shared capital, very difficult to achieve." The European Union, Israel's biggest trading partner, has been increasingly vocal in its criticism of new settlements just as Israel is gearing up for general elections next month. In an unprecedented move, a string of European governments summoned their local Israeli ambassadors to lodge protests following the Israeli settlement announcements. □

Republican's surprise 'Plan B' move stalls 'cliff' talks

WASHINGTON (AP) — Negotiations to avoid the looming fiscal cliff hit a lull Tuesday as House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner announced that Republicans had a back-up plan, a surprise move that followed significant progress over the past several days in talks with President Barack Obama. With just two weeks left before the deadline to avoid the fiscal cliff, the White House and leading congressional Democrats immediately rejected Boehner's "Plan B," which would extend soon-to-expire Bush-era tax cuts for everyone making less than \$1 million but would not address huge across-the-board spending cuts that are set to strike the Pentagon and domestic programs next year. The talks had produced movement on tax rate hikes that have proven deeply unsettling to conservatives and on



Speaker of the House John Boehner, R-Ohio, wincing while talking to a reporter on the way to a closed-door meeting with House Republicans as he negotiates with President Obama to avert the fiscal cliff, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

cuts to federal Social Security pensions that have incensed liberal Democrats. "Instead of making tough choices today House Republicans are threatening to abandon serious negotiations," said Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.

Reid added: "Everyone should understand Boehner's proposal will not pass the Senate." Just Monday, Obama offered concessions, including a plan to raise top tax rates on households earning more than \$400,000 instead of the \$250,000

threshold he had campaigned on before winning re-election. And the two sides had inched closer on the total amount of tax revenue required to seal the agreement to rein in deficit spending. Obama now would settle for \$1.2 trillion over the coming decade while Boehner is offering \$1 trillion. By contrast, protecting income below \$1 million from a hike in the top tax rate from 35 percent to 39.6 percent would raise only \$269 billion over the coming decade. But the outlines of a possible Obama-Boehner agreement appeared to have shaky support at best from Boehner's leadership team and outright opposition from key Republicans like vice presidential nominee Paul Ryan, a House Republican aide said. That aide spoke only on condition of anonymity because the aide was not autho-

rized to discuss the situation publicly. Though Obama spokesman Jay Carney had nothing good to say about Boehner's new option, he said, "The president is willing to continue to work with Republicans" toward a broader agreement. The narrower Plan B faced plenty of opposition. Democrats announced they would oppose it, and many conservative Republicans continued to resist any vote that might be interpreted as raising taxes. Republicans were refining the measure Tuesday in hopes of building support among the party's rank and file, but passing the measure exclusively with Republican votes could prove difficult. Democrats said Boehner's move made it clear he was abandoning efforts to reach an agreement with Obama — much as he quit talks with Obama 18 months ago. □

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Alhambra
CASINO AND SHOPS

Obama, lawmakers endorse assault weapons ban

Continued from front

Obama "does want to move," Carney told reporters. "He wants to move in the coming weeks, which is a fairly short period of time. And while he supports, and strongly, renewal of the assault weapons ban, and strongly other measures, he wants to expand the conversation beyond those specific areas of legislation to look at other ways we can address this problem." Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., the author of the assault weapons ban that became law in 1994 but expired in 2004, says she will introduce an "updated" assault weapons ban when Congress convenes Jan. 3. Her new bill would outlaw 100 specifically-named firearms, weapons that can accept detachable magazines as well as certain semiautomatic rifles, handguns and shotguns that can accept a detachable magazine and semiautomatic rifles and handguns with a fixed magazine that can accept more than 10 rounds. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., took the floor of the Senate on Tuesday to describe how Adam Lanza, armed with a Bushmaster AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, a 10 mm Glock handgun, a 9 mm Sig Sauer pistol, and magazines filled with hundreds of rounds of ammunition, invaded Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown and killed students and staffers. "There is no single new law, no simple solution, that will be a cure-all" to the violence, Blumenthal said, "but there are sound, sensible steps that we can take. . . . We need to do something to effectively ban assault weapons. I am talking about weapons that are not designed for



White House press secretary Jay Carney briefs reporters at the White House in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012.

(AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

self-defense or hunting, but rather for killing and maiming human beings, often as many as possible, as fast as possible. Weapons that are civilian versions of military weapons. There is no reason that such weapons should be for sale today in America." Ben Marter, a spokesman for Sen.-elect Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said the incoming lawmaker "won't just vote for (a ban) - he'll work hard to make sure that it passes." The state's five House members - Reps. Jim Himes, D-Greenwich, Rosa DeLauro, D-New Haven, Joe Courtney, D-Vernon, and John Larson, D-East Hartford - also said they supported a ban on assault weapons, though they would wait until they saw specific legislative language before endorsing any particular bill. The drive to reinstate the assault weapons ban also picked up the endorsement of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which announced its support of the legislation that Feinstein is preparing. Feinstein was the sponsor the 1994 ban that outlawed 18 specific

By pushing for a new assault weapons ban, the Obama administration could reap political benefits among suburban voters who abhor weapons of that type. On the other hand, if House Republicans thwart any effort to renew the ban, the Obama administration could gain among those voters who would blame Republicans for blocking a new ban. Meantime, the campaign against assault weapons broadened Tuesday to include legislation against ammunition magazines that could hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. A bill backed by Reps. Carolyn McCarthy, D-N.Y., and Diana DeGette, D-Colo., would ban magazines for more than 10 rounds of ammunition. □

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Judge indicates suspect can keep beard

FORT HOOD, Texas (AP)

— The Army psychiatrist charged in the deadly Fort Hood shooting rampage apparently will be allowed to keep his beard during his military trial, after a new judge indicated Tuesday that she won't force him to shave.

The previous judge's order requiring Maj. Nidal Hasan to be clean-shaven or be forcibly shaved before his trial had tied up the case for more than three months, but an appeals court ousted that judge earlier this month.

Hasan, 42, an American-born Muslim, faces the death penalty or life in military prison without parole if convicted in the 2009 rampage that killed 13 and wounded more than two dozen others on the Texas Army post.

The new judge overseeing Hasan's case told him during a hearing Tuesday that the beard, now thick-

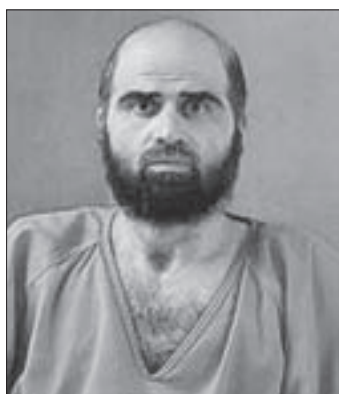


Photo shows Nidal Hasan, the Army psychiatrist charged in the deadly 2009 Fort Hood shooting rampage.

(AP Photo)

er than when he first appeared in court with it in June, violates Army regulations. The judge, Col. Tara Osborn, said she won't hold it against him but that military jurors might.

Hasan answered "yes, ma'am" when Osborn asked if he grew the beard voluntarily. In a previous court hearing, he said he grew the beard because his Muslim faith requires it and not as a show of disrespect. Osborn asked defense attorneys to draft jury instructions about the issue. Jurors likely will be told not to consider Hasan's appearance when deciding on a verdict.

Osborn was appointed to the case two weeks ago, after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces removed the former judge and tossed his order regarding Hasan's beard. The ruling said Col. Gregory Gross did not appear impartial while presiding over Hasan's case and that the command — not a judge — is responsible for enforcing military grooming standards.

ing military grooming standards.

Hasan's trial date hasn't been set. Osborn first has to rule on several pending motions. Defense attorneys also want Osborn to reverse Gross' rulings on nearly two dozen motions, including requests for change-of-venue, a couple of experts and some investigative reports.

Defense attorneys also said they will again ask that Hasan be allowed to plead guilty. At an August hearing, Gross said he was not able to accept a guilty plea on the 13 charges of premeditated murder because Army rules prohibit a judge from accepting a guilty plea in a death penalty case.

Hasan also is charged with 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder. □

BENGHAZI REVIEW

Continued from front

Late that evening, militants overran the lightly defended U.S. Consulate, setting fire to it and ultimately killing Stevens and information specialist Sean Smith. Militants later fired mortars at the CIA safe house where survivors had taken refuge, killing Americans Glen Doherty and Tyrone Woods, both former Navy SEALs working for the CIA who had come to help rescue the diplomats.

Retired Ambassador Thomas Pickering and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Adm. Mike Mullen led the independent review, studying cables, video and intelligence and interviewing some survivors. Their review will also include their recommendations on how to keep it from happening again.

The classified section of their report was sent to Capitol Hill on Tuesday afternoon, a State Department official said. As it was being transmitted, the department began to implement its recommendations, with a team of senior diplomats convening to look at how to execute them.

An unclassified summary of the report is expected to be made public on Wednesday. On Thursday, the State Department's two deputy secretaries will testify in open sessions before House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was to have appeared at Thursday's hearing but cancelled after fainting and sustaining a concussion last week while recovering from a stomach virus that dehydrated her. Clinton is under doctors' orders to rest. □

Chinese nationals tried to buy sensitive devices

J. J. COOPER

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)

— Two Chinese nationals tried to buy high-tech devices that could be used in missile and radar systems and illegally export them to China, federal authorities allege in an indictment unsealed Tuesday.

The men, who live in China, have not been arrested. They were indicted Sept. 28, 2011, by a grand jury

in U.S. District Court in Portland.

The indictment alleges that Wan Li Yuan and Jiang Song created fake identities and pretended to represent a legitimate New York business to purchase computer chips from Lattice Semiconductor Corp. of Hillsboro, Ore. Authorities say they created a fictitious website and email accounts for the company, which wasn't identified

and wasn't involved in the alleged scheme.

Investigators weren't aware of the men successfully obtaining any of the sensitive chips, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Charles Gorber, who is prosecuting the case.

Authorities say the men wired \$414,000 to the United States in 10 transactions as down payments for two models of Lattice chips known as programmable logic devices. The money was seized.

The devices can be used for civilian purposes including mining operations. The indictment alleges the men specifically sought military-grade devices, which are coated in ceramic instead of plastic and are capable of withstanding harsh conditions like extremely hot or cold temperatures.

Export of both models sought by the men is restricted for national security reasons and requires a permit from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

According to prosecutors, Yuan, calling himself Nick Bush, first contacted Lattice in May 2010, pretending to be a representative of the New York company and expressing interest in purchasing a device for use in a U.S. coal mine. He tried to get the devices shipped to a freight forwarder in New York.

Later, he also offered to pay an undercover FBI employee \$10,000 to deliver parts to Hong Kong, according to prosecutors, and he offered to pay a distributor a "commission" to look the other way about his suspicions that the parts were destined to China. □

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2 escape high-rise US jail with rope or bedsheet

DON BABWIN
MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Two convicted bank robbers were on the run after using a knotted rope or bed sheets to escape from a high-rise federal jail in downtown Chicago early Tuesday, a week after one of them made a courtroom vow of retribution.

The two men were first unaccounted for during a 5 a.m. head count, but it's unclear if they were still inside the 27-story Metropolitan Correctional Center at the time, U.S. Marshal's Service spokeswoman Belkis Cantor said.

Local shop owners say police didn't swarm the area until more than three hours later, when what appeared to be a rope, knotted at six-foot intervals, could be seen dangling from a window about 20 stories up.

Police had said earlier Tuesday that the escape occurred sometime between

5 a.m. and 8:45 a.m.

Joseph "Jose" Banks, 37, and Kenneth Conley, 38, had been wearing prison-issue orange jumpsuits, but now might be wearing white t-shirts, gray sweat pants and white gym shoes, Chicago Police Sgt. Mark Lazarro said.

The FBI said the men were last seen together in the Tinley Park area, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) southwest of Chicago, and that they should be considered armed and dangerous.

SWAT teams stormed a Tinley Park home early Tuesday afternoon, but the escapees were not there, FBI Special Agent Frank Bochte said. He said there was evidence the two had been there earlier, and authorities were using dogs and helicopters to search various places in the Chicago area where the two had connections.

The men apparently descended from a narrow window on the flat south

side of the jail into the alley below. The wall faces a parking garage and is above air conditioning or heating units.

Crowds of people gath-

in the heart of downtown Chicago, just a block or two from key federal court and office buildings. The facility, which houses around 700 inmates, is one of the

mid-1970s. Its triangular shape is supposed to reduce the number of blind spots for guards, Lucente said. Each cell has a window as part of the building's humane design, she said. Security concerns have arisen before about the lockup. Last year, federal authorities opposed a request from attorneys for Mexican drug-cartel lieutenant Vincente Zambada — held there on trafficking charges — to let him out on the rooftop recreational area, where in the summer inmates can be seen playing basketball. Officials feared snipers could target Zambada or that he might try a daring escape from atop the 27-story building. He was later moved to a lockup in Michigan. In 2010, the brother of Hollywood director Christopher Nolan was sentenced to 14 months for plotting to escape from the facility by hiding a rope made out of bed sheets in his cell. □



Police tape surrounds the Metropolitan Correctional Center Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012, in Chicago. Two convicted bank robbers used a knotted rope or bed sheets to escape from the federal prison window high above downtown Chicago early Tuesday, a week after one of them made a courtroom vow of retribution, to federal judge.
(AP Photo/M. Spencer Green)

ered outside the building where the ropes still blew in the breeze, shaking their heads in disbelief that someone could have escaped from a lockup

only skyscraper jails in the world, said Jennifer Lucente of Chicago Architecture Foundation.

Architect Harry Weese designed the building in the

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<i>Special Lunch Menu</i>	<i>The Christmas Menu</i>	<i>The Noel Menu</i>	<i>Santa's Menu</i>	<i>The Star Bright Menu</i>
<p><i>Appetizer</i> Empanada Argentina Or Caesar Salad</p> <p><i>Entrée</i> Skirt Steak Or Seafood Skewer,</p> <p><i>Dessert</i> Sorbet Or Flan</p>	<p><i>Appetizer</i> Empanada Argentina Or Cream of Broccoli Soup Or Ajaca Navidenja</p> <p><i>Entrée</i> Fresh fillet of Grouper Pan fried and served with garlic & herb butter sauce Or Grilled Skirt Steak</p> <p><i>Dessert</i> Sweet Sampler A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie</p>	<p><i>Appetizer</i> Chorizo & Morcilla Or Cream of Pumpkin Soup Or Ajaca Navidenja</p> <p><i>Entrée</i> Seafood Trio A combination platter of Fish Fillet, Garlic Shrimp & Served Squid Buenos Aires Or Premium cut, 8 oz Tenderloin Steak</p> <p><i>Dessert</i> Sweet Sampler A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie</p>	<p><i>Appetizer</i> Conch Harbor Seyle Or Chilled Shrimp Cocktail Or Ajaca Navidenja</p> <p><i>Entrée</i> Surf & Turf 8 oz Tenderloin Steak with 2 Jumbo Garlic Shrimp Or Parrilla Argentina A combination of five different cuts of beef</p> <p><i>Dessert</i> Sweet Sampler A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie</p>	<p><i>Appetizer</i> The classic Caesar Salad Or Sautéed Jumbo Garlic Shrimp Or Ajaca Navidenja</p> <p><i>Entrée</i> Grilled Veal Chop marinated in chimichurri herbs Or Fillet of Norwegian Salmon, with homemade herb & lemon butter Or Our world famous Gaucho Steak</p> <p><i>Dessert</i> Sweet Sampler A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie</p>
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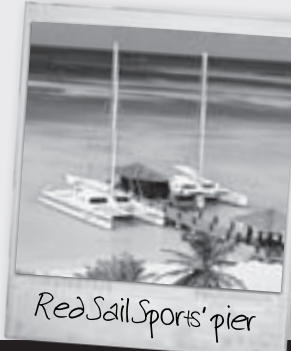
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Egypt: Probe launched into vote irregularities

MAGGIE MICHAEL

Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Thousands of Egyptian protesters marched on the presidential palace and Cairo's downtown Tahrir Square on Tuesday to protest a contentious Islamist-backed draft constitution, after the country's Justice Ministry ordered a probe into allegations of widespread voting irregularities during Saturday's first round of vot-

ing on the document. Preliminary results showed that 56 percent of voted cast "yes." The second round of voting is set for Saturday. The opposition fears that large Islamist constituencies in rural and upper Egypt will increase the votes in favor.

Turnout was also low in Egypt's 150 diplomatic missions, which opened

say the process has been rushed, turnout has been low and irregularities in the voting have been rife.

They insist that the constitution requires more than a simple majority, and many have called for the referendum voting to be repeated because of irregularities. The Brotherhood says the country's Elections Committee can adjudicate complaints.



An Egyptian protester opposing president Mohammed Morsi, pictured on a placard in Arabic that reads "a warning from the extremism," during a rally in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. (AP Photo/Nasser Nasser)

Since the country's political crisis erupted more than three weeks ago, the opposition has kept the pressure on the government of President Mohammed Morsi with mass marches that at times have seen turnouts of hundreds of thousands. Morsi's Islamist supporters have countered with rallies of their own. Chanting "down with Brotherhood rule," and "your constitution is void," the opposition made its first major street push since Saturday's round

their doors for a half million Egyptian expatriates to vote. Preliminary results showed stark difference between Egyptians in Arab Gulf countries and elsewhere. In Washington D.C., more than 70 percent of voters said "no," while in Saudi city of Jeddah, more than 80 percent voted "yes." Islamists have suggested that passage of the constitution would give them a clearer mandate, but the opposition groups

The protests also follow closely on new blows in the conflict between Morsi and the judiciary. More leading judges announced a boycott of the second leg of voting, and the Prosecutor General Talaat Abdullah submitted his resignation just a month after Morsi appointed him. Abdullah had come under fire from fellow prosecutors, who accused him of pressuring a judge not to release some 130 anti-Morsi protesters from detention. □

United Nations presents grim prognosis on world economy

RICK GLADSTONE

© 2012 New YoTimes

World economic growth has weakened substantially this year and faces the confluence of a triple threat — the fiscal cliff in the United States, a worsening European debt crisis and a sharp slowdown in China, the United Nations said in a year-end report released Tuesday. The worst case, the report said, could be a new global recession that mires many countries in a cycle of austerity and unemployment for years. The principal author of the report, Robert Vos, director of the Development Policy and Analysis Division of the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said the trends meant it could take until at least 2017 just to recoup the jobs lost in the U.S. and Europe since the 2008-09 global recession.

He forecast the pace of world growth for 2013 at 2.4 percent, "a significant downgrade" from the U.N. midyear forecast of 3.1 percent. He said the 2012 growth rate was 2.2 percent, weaker than the midyear forecast of 2.5 percent.

"I'm afraid this time around we're not very optimistic about how things are moving," Vos told a news conference at the U.N. headquarters.

"A worsening of the euro area crisis, the 'fiscal cliff' in the United States and a hard landing in China could cause a new global recession," Vos said in the report, titled "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2013." He said

the forecast pace of growth "will be far from sufficient to overcome the continued jobs crisis that many countries are still facing."

The report's proposals to avoid that outcome — more government programs that focus on job growth, fiscal coordination and aid to developing countries — are not likely to be widely embraced by policymakers in the U.S. and Europe, where the major preoccupation is on budget cuts and spending discipline. Still, the report provides one of the most complete assessments of the world's economic trends and reflects what United Nations experts view as the most pressing areas of concern.

Shamshad Akhtar, assistant secretary general for economic development, who introduced Vos' report, began by reciting a litany of maladies, including record unemployment in Europe, a decline in global trade, volatility in the international flows of capital and low food stocks in many poorer countries that have made prices in those countries unpredictable.

"Even minor supply shocks may cause new prices hikes and shortages," she said.

While she and Vos acknowledged the news reports on progress in the debt-reduction negotiations between the White House and congressional Republicans to avoid dire automatic year-end spending cuts, the so-called fiscal cliff, they erred on the side of assuming the worst. Both said the international economic shock of such spending cuts would reverberate quickly, further weakening economies elsewhere. □



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Berlusconi wants vote delay

FRANCES D'EMILIO
Associated Press Writer

ROME (AP) — Silvio Berlusconi and fellow leaders of his splintering conservative party on Tuesday pressed for a delay in Italy's national elections, now widely expected for mid-February, arguing they need more time to prepare for the campaign. The scandal-scarred former three-time premier, who is considering running for the post again, said on a state TV talk show that the "rush toward elections" is "useless," and that party leaders need more time to draw up lists of candidates for Parliament.

Italy's President Giorgio Napolitano is expected to dissolve the legislature as soon as it passes the government's proposed austerity budget law. Premier Mario Monti has pledged to resign

as soon as the law passes. Then Napolitano will announce an election date, which officials have indicated would likely be Feb. 17.

Monti, an economist appointed to save Italy from financial disaster and who replaced Berlusconi, hasn't said if he will run. Since late last year, he has headed a non-elected government of technocrats.

The final vote on the budget bill was expected on Friday. But on Tuesday, one of Berlusconi's parliamentary whips, Fabrizio Cicchitto, abruptly announced that his Freedom Party is seeking more time to study the legislation, and added that Feb. 24 would be a "more reasonable date" for the election. □

UN ICC acquits Congolese rebel leader of war crimes

MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The International Criminal Court acquitted a Congolese militia leader Tuesday of all charges of commanding fighters who

and Gbagbo is in custody in The Hague awaiting a possible trial.

The Tuesday's verdict also cast a shadow over ICC prosecutors' efforts to collect and present evidence of atrocities in complex

and could not prove definitively that Ngudjolo led the rebel attack on the village of Bogoro, but they emphasized that Ngudjolo's acquittal did not mean that no crimes occurred in the village.

"If an allegation has not been proven beyond a reasonable doubt ... this does not necessarily mean that the alleged fact did not occur," Presiding Judge Bruno Cotte of France said. Ngudjolo showed no emotion at the acquittal. His lawyer, Jean-Pierre Kileda, said his client had always insisted he was innocent.

Judges "showed that this court respects the rights of defendants," the lawyer said. Eric Witte, an expert in international law at the Open Society Justice Initiative, said the judgment "will send a worrying signal about the quality of ICC prosecutions."

He said Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda may now need to rethink the way her office builds its cases. □



Former leader of the National Integrationist Front Mathieu Ngudjolo, left, awaits his verdict at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, Netherlands, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. (AP Photo)

destroyed a village in eastern Congo in 2003, raping and hacking to death some 200 people, including children.

The acquittal of Mathieu Ngudjolo on charges including rape, murder and pillage was only the second verdict in the court's 10-year history and the first time it had cleared a suspect.

The only other ICC verdict, handed down earlier this year, convicted another Congolese rebel leader, Thomas Lubanga, of using child soldiers in battles in Ituri. He was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

The court has indicted far more senior suspects than Ngudjolo, including Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo. Al-Bashir refuses to surrender to the court

conflicts thousands of miles from the court's headquarters in The Hague.

Judges said the testimony of three key prosecution witnesses was unreliable

Chavez's brother heads to Cuba

VIVIAN SEQUERA
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — President Hugo Chavez's elder brother reportedly was heading to Cuba on Tuesday to visit the Venezuelan leader amid uncertainty and concern at home over his condition after a fourth cancer-related surgery. The government newspaper Correo del Orinoco said Adan Chavez planned to leave in the afternoon. It also said that the president's father, Hugo de los Reyes Chavez, had plans to travel to Havana and that Chavez's mother might go with him, though that had not been confirmed.

Against the backdrop of Chavez's illness, many Venezuelans are talking about the possibility of a looming transition of power and a new presidential election. Before undergoing surgery, Chavez designated Vice President Nicolas Maduro

as his chosen successor to take his place if necessary. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos expressed concern Tuesday about what might happen if a post-Chavez transition were to go badly. In a radio interview, he said a peaceful and problem-free change would have "no repercussion in the region." "What would be terrible is if that transition weren't easy, were problematic," Santos said in an interview with Colombia's W Radio. "That would generate problems in the region. That's why I've said that Chavez is a factor of stability at this time."

Chavez's government has been appointed a facilitator in peace talks between Colombia's government and rebels, and Santos noted that he has had a good relationship with Venezuela's leftist leader despite their differences. □

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Iraq's Talabani suffers stroke, fuels political uncertainty

ADAM SCHRECK
Q.ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi President Jalal Talabani has suffered a stroke and was in intensive care at a Baghdad hospital Tuesday, injecting new uncertainty into the country's political future a year after the U.S. military left.

Although his official powers are limited, Talabani, 79, is respected by many Iraqis as a rare unifying figure seen as able to rise above the ethnic and sectarian rifts that still divide the country. Known for his joking manner and walrus-like moustache, Talabani has been actively involved in trying to mediate an ongoing crisis between Iraq's central government and the country's ethnic Kurdish minority, from which he hails.

Iraqi state TV and several officials, including the prime minister's spokesman and Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq, confirmed to The Associated Press that Talabani had a stroke. The severity remains unclear.

Talabani's spokesman, Nasser al-Ani, told reporters that the president is in stable condition, though he did not say what he was suffering from. Medical officials who appeared with him were just as circumspect. They did not take questions.

"The president's health is being closely followed up by our medical team. The vital organs are working and we hope that there will be no deterioration," said Dr. Ayad Abbas from the intensive care unit where Talabani is being treated. "We hope that we will see improvement in the com-



Iraq's President Jalal Talabani talks to reporters in Baghdad, Iraq. The office of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said Talabani has suffered a stroke and is in intensive care at a Baghdad hospital, Tuesday, December 18, 2012.

(AP Photo/Hadi Mizban)

ing hours."

The presidential office initially said Tuesday that Talabani was hospitalized the previous evening after showing signs of fatigue. A later statement cited tests

showing he is suffering from a condition caused by a hardening of his arteries. It did not identify the condition. Some local media reports suggested that Talabani had died, but Foreign

Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said that was not the case.

Rifle-toting soldiers assigned to the presidential guard were deployed around Medical City, Baghdad's largest medical complex, where Talabani is being treated. A number of senior government officials and lawmakers were seen rushing to the hospital to check on his condition, though their bodyguards were mostly not being allowed inside.

Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was among those who stopped by to check on the president, according to his spokesman, Ali al-Mousawi. Medical teams from Germany and Britain are expected to arrive and will decide whether the president's condition is serious enough for him to be sent abroad for treatment, al-Mutlaq said. □

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South Korean presidential hopefuls promise change

FOSTER KLUG
HYUNG-JIN KIM
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The liberal son of North Korean refugees faces the conservative daughter of a late dictator in South Korea's presidential election Wednesday. For all their differences, they hold similar views on the need to engage with Pyongyang and other issues.

One big reason: Voters are deeply dissatisfied with current President Lee Myung-bak, including with his hard-line stance on the country's authoritarian rival to the north. Park Geun-hye, who belongs to Lee's party, has had to tack to the center in her bid to become South Korea's first woman president.

Polls showed Park and Moon Jae-in in a dead heat ahead of elections to lead Asia's fourth-largest

economy and an important U.S. security bulwark in the region.

There's deepening worry about the economy and disgust over the alleged in-

hardline views for encouraging North Korea to conduct nuclear and missile tests — including Pyongyang's rocket launch last week. Some also say the

50 South Koreans in 2010.

The effort to create distance with Lee has been difficult for Park, whose popularity rests on a staunchly conservative, anti-North Korea base.

Both candidates propose pulling back from Lee's insistence that engagement with North Korea be linked to so-far-nonexistent nuclear disarmament progress by Pyongyang. Park, however, insists on more conditions than Moon, who wants to restore large-scale government aid.

Moon is a former chief of staff to Lee's predecessor, late President Roh Moo-hyun, who championed the so-called "sunshine policy" of no-strings-attached aid for Pyongyang.

Moon said on the eve of the election that he envisions a "politics that integrates all people. Politics that does not divide."

He wants an early summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Park has also held out the possibility of such a meeting, but only if it's "an honest dialogue on issues of mutual concern."

Whoever wins the presidential Blue House will set the initial tone for new North Korea policy not just in Seoul but in Washington, Beijing and Tokyo.

All those governments have recently undergone an election, a change of leadership or both, and they have been waiting for a new South Korean leader before making any big decisions on North Korea policy. A Moon election could lead to friction with Washington if new engagement with Pyongyang comes without any of the reciprocal nuclear disarmament progress that Washington demands from the North. □



South Korean presidential candidate Moon Jae-in of the opposition Democratic United Party holding a poster poses with supporters during his presidential election campaign in Seoul's Gangnam district, South Korea, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012. South Korea's presidential election is scheduled for Dec. 19. The letters read "Let's Vote Dec. 19". (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

volvement of aides close to Lee in corruption scandals. Many voters blame Lee's

chill in North-South relations led to two attacks blamed on Pyongyang that killed

China detains 500-plus people for doomsday rumors

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese police have detained more than 500 people from a fringe Christian group for spreading rumors about the world's impending end, state media reported Tuesday.

In western China's Qinghai province alone, police arrested more than 400 members from the religious cult group, state-run China Central Television said Tuesday.

Police seized leaflets, video discs, books and other apocalyptic materials in the recent arrests of more than 500 people across eight provinces and regions, from the prosperous east coast to less developed western China, state media reports said.

The detentions come ahead of Friday, Dec. 21 — a date some say the Mayans prophesized would be the end of the world

and which was the subject of the apocalyptic movie "2012."

Those detained are reported to be members of the group Almighty God, which is also called Eastern Lightning, after a phrase from the Bible's Book of Matthew. Widely regarded as a heretical Christian sect, the group preaches that Jesus has reappeared as a woman in central China. It has been accused of tar-

geting Christians, kidnapping and beating them to force conversions.

Chinese society has been in tumult as decades of rapid free-market economic growth discredit communist ideology, loosen social controls and pull hundreds of millions from the countryside to the cities. Into the spiritual void have rushed traditional Buddhist groups and Daoist practices, as well as evangelical Chris-

tian churches and other spiritual groups, some with unorthodox and apocalyptic visions.

Eastern Lightning first appeared around 20 years ago, and the official Xinhua News Agency said that its members had "recently latched on to the Mayan doomsday prophecy to predict that the sun will not shine and electricity will not work for three days beginning on Dec. 21." □

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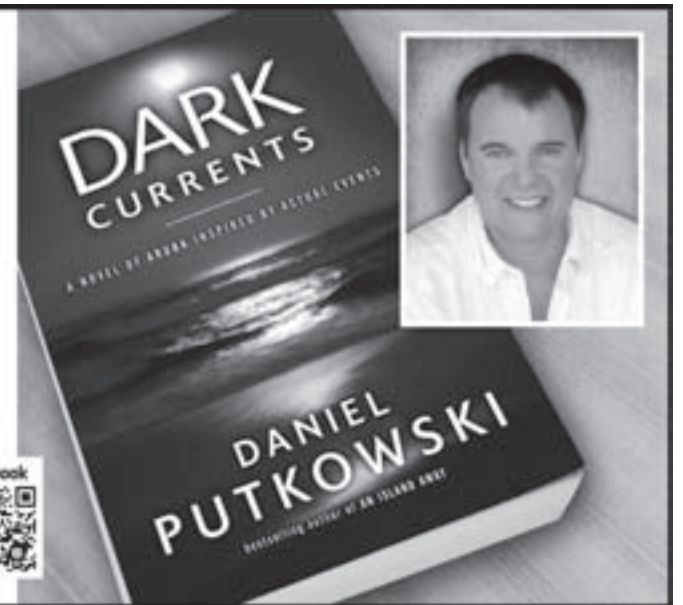
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Century-old fight for Budweiser name hits new snag

KAREL JANICEK

Associated Press

CESKE BUDEJOVICE, Czech Republic (AP) — They've

been arguing about a name for 106 years. A small brewer in the Czech Republic and the world's biggest beer maker have been suing each other over the right to put the word Budweiser on their bottles in what has become a David versus Goliath corporate saga.

A deal, it seems, will have to wait a bit longer because settlement talks between state-owned Budejovický Budvar and Anheuser-Busch, a U.S. company now part of AB InBev, have collapsed, according to Budvar's director general, Jiri Bocek.

The dispute is over exclusive rights — when only one of the companies is allowed to use the Budweiser name in any given country. As a larger company, AB InBev is particularly keen to expand its exports and market its beers under the Budweiser brand. But Budvar says that giving up its exclusive rights to the name would threaten to wipe out its own brand from the market.

Budvar recently rejected a proposal for a global settlement by AB InBev, which in turn refused a counteroffer. Bocek said negotiations on these proposals, details of which he could not provide, were over.

"Any new deal proposed by Anheuser-Busch wouldn't be working for us," he told The Associated Press in a rare interview with a major foreign news organization. AB InBev declined to com-

ment on the details of the talks.

The brewers last agreed on a global settlement in 1939 in a pact that gave Anheuser-Busch sole rights to the name Budweiser in all American territories north of Panama. But the peace

such as Germany with the Budweiser brand.

When the companies do not have exclusive rights to the Budweiser brand in a country, they resort to using slightly altered names. AB InBev sells its Budweiser as Bud in many European

companies already share the Budweiser name in one country, Britain.

Both brewers were granted the right to use the name in 2000 after a British court ruled that drinkers were aware of the difference between the two beers. An

they receive the clean, crisp taste of the global brand we have created."

But most beer drinkers would easily spot the difference, says Iain Loe, former research manager for Britain's Campaign for Real Ale, a consumer rights organization.

Budvar has "a full bodied taste" while "AB's Budweiser has little taste, or in the words of AB InBev, a clean taste," said Loe. "Customers know which beer is which."

The companies' claims to the Budweiser name are built on two main arguments — geography and history.

"Budvar blocks the markets where AB InBev, due to its trading power, marketing and distribution potential, would likely gain significantly more," said Karel Potmesil, an analyst at stock brokerage Cyrrus AS. "The dispute limits the development of the brands that the company considers the most valuable in the industry."

"The dispute has not hindered our global expansion," said Couck, the spokeswoman.

She cited figures showing AB InBev's global sales were up 3.1 percent in 2011 and 6.2 percent in the first nine months of 2012. The U.S. Budweiser is brewed in more than 15 countries and sold in more than 80 others. Its key markets are the United States, China, Canada and Britain. Budvar holds rights for Germany and other European markets as well as 11 Asian countries, including Japan, Korea, China and Vietnam. □



A brewer checks a glass of beer at the Budejovický Budvar brewery in Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic. They've been arguing about a name for 106 years. A small brewer in the Czech Republic and the world's biggest beer maker have been suing each other over the right to put the word Budweiser on their bottles in what has become a David versus Goliath corporate saga.

(AP Photo/Petr David Josek)

did not last long as the two companies expanded exports to new markets.

Though AB InBev is far larger than Budvar — it produces 270 times more beer — the Czech company has been punching above its weight in the legal arena. It won 88 of 124 disputes between 2000 and 2011 and holds exclusive rights in 68 countries, mostly in Europe, preventing AB InBev from entering some key markets

countries. Budvar sells its larger as Czechvar in the U.S. One of the issues, Bocek said, is that AB InBev is not satisfied with sharing the brand name.

"Their goal is to gain exclusivity for their Budweiser all around the world," said Bocek, who as head of Budvar for the past 21 years has raised the heat on the larger rival.

Co-existence is possible, however. In fact, the two

appeals court this summer rejected AB InBev's request to have Budvar's trademark declared invalid.

AB InBev is not happy with the situation.

"Our concern is that coexistence on the U.K. market with the Budweiser brand will lead to consumer confusion," said Karen Couck, the spokeswoman for AB InBev. "We want to make sure that when our customers order a Budweiser that



At an elegant Christmas celebration:

Caribbean Palm Village Resorts Honors Top Performers

NOORD – Carlos Henao was honored at Caribbean Palm Village Resort with the prestigious title Employee of the Year for 2012, in recognition for his outstanding performance and positive attitude. Carlos was presented with a handsome plaque by Interim General Manager Astrid Muller, Treasurer of the Board Randy Croes and Chairman of the Board Ed Hayes. The award ceremony took place in the resort's Scabeche restaurant over cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, followed by holiday dinner, door prizes and dancing.

The award ceremony also lauded Juanita Dorothal for her loyal support and considerable efforts within the housekeeping department. She shared the stage and the well-deserved round of applause with Shining Stars 2012, Sadia Futa, Kenjah Howell and Ariana Tromp.

Muller then went on to explain that each quarter the resort selects a number of nominees for the Employee of the Quarter title and at the end of the year just one individual is singled out as the Employee of the Year,



yet as all nominees are praise-worthy and deserving of laurels she invited them all to join a group picture, with First Quarter

winner Juanita Dorothal, Second and Fourth Quarter winner Carlos Henao, and Third Quarter winner Richard Web.

The gathering also sang the praise of those who went the extra mile awarding them special tokens of appreciation.

Last but not least the gathering acknowledged veteran Michiel Zievinger for his 25 years of service. Maria Jimenez-Afanador also accepted congratulations with ten years of service besides four other individuals who concluded their five years of service, just recently.

The award ceremony demonstrated the closely knit ties between associates and the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation, abundant at the intimate



timeshare resort in Noord. Pictured here, the celebration of achievement and the recognition of top-

performing associates, by members of management at the Caribbean Palm Village Resort. □



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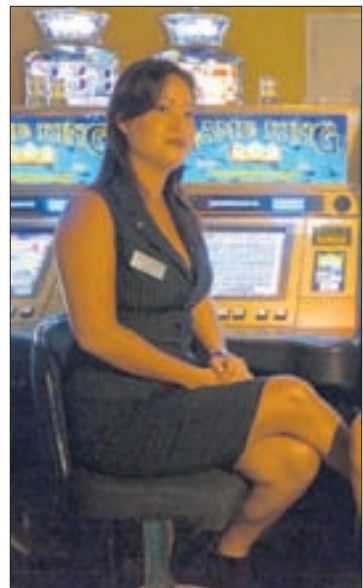
Chantal Cha Young keeps the Radisson Casino hopping!

PALM BEACH – The Casino at the Radisson enjoys a packed schedule of activities and promotions, under the direction of Casino Sales & Marketing Coordinator Chantal Cha Young. Patrons are offered free bingo, high stake bingo, happy hour, ladies night, slot and BJ tournaments, and holiday celebrations, all perfectly orchestrated with great creativity and flair by this HWTM (hostess



with the most-ess), who is passionate about her guests and the extra dose of fun they experience when visiting the casino at the Radisson. Chantal started her career at the Casino at the Radisson as a hostess in January of 2002. In her mind it was a temporary position. As a stewardess with Air Aruba, she was laid off with the rest of the flight crew when the airline folded and she was going to join another aviation company down the road, but meanwhile, the casino seemed an excellent interim stop. In August she became a dealer, easily mastering Caribbean Stud Poker and Blackjack. She found the Roulette wheel pay scales confusing, paying out buckets of chips to her guests, then management obviously

decided that Roulette was not her thing, and blackjack became her game of choice. In 2007, she became the assistant to the casino manager, spending two wonderful years in operations, and increasing her knowledge of casino procedures. It was an un-



forgettable time, which sparked her ambition to study overseas, and further develop her career. She left to go to the Netherlands in 2009, and soon found out that you can take a girl out of the island, but you cannot take the island off a girl's mind.

Chantal shares that she was raised by two powerful and determined women, her mom, a hospital nurse in charge of the delivery room, and her grandma who cared for her all her life while mom was working. In Chantal's absence, grandma's health was failing, and Chantal decided to come right back where she was needed. She also returned to the casino, as soon as the call came, it felt like the right thing to do, she says.

In her position as the Casino's Sales & Marketing Coordinator Chantal orchestrates the promotions and oversees the Winners' Circle players club. In collaboration with her team, she managed to sign up more than 6,000 members since its inception, and she enjoys helping patrons re-

deem their points and cash out their winnings, as much as she enjoys posing with them for the camera when they land a surprising jackpot.

We meet many people at the Casino, guests from all of the hotels, and locals too, she explains, they like the cozy atmosphere in the casino and the fact that we recognize many of them by name.

In honor of the upcoming holidays, Chantal is currently busy putting together the 12 Days of Poker promotion which will benefit the local orphanage and also plans a spectacular New Year's Eve, for December 31st, escorting the old year out with a bang and welcoming the new one in with champagne and music. Incidentally, she says, the Bingo Progressive at \$25,600, and the Bad Beat Jackpot at \$48,272, are calling players to come and get them, and if that is not enough the Caribbean Stud Poker currently offers a \$60,303 jackpot. That's plenty of good reasons to go visit Chantal at the Casino at the Radisson. □

Beauty On The Beach

Laura Vink

From Florida, first time in Aruba, staying at the Aruba Marriott Beach Resort, leaving Saturday. Please if her picture can be published before Saturday.

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EAGLE BEACH - A series of most-enjoyable events featuring great food & fine wines marked the official opening of Ike's Bistro recently. The restaurant's mission to create a unique eatery where the Mediterranean meets the Caribbean was accomplished with the help of its resident chef Ever de Pena, and



visiting celebrity French chef, Alberto Ughetto, from Provence, France. The two talented professionals collaborated on a number of well-attended Surprise Tasting Dinners, leading up to the official launch at a sunset cocktail party on Tuesday. The party was graced by members of the press, neighboring hotel executives, and friends of the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa who came to congratulate Board Member Bill Crona and General Manager Edgar Roelofs on the spectacular addition to their resort's menu of services. On the occasion of the party, Chef Alberto and Executive Chef George prepared a giant seafood Paella while Chef Ever oversaw the creation of bite-size menu samples off the new restaurant menu, paired with a nice selection of wines from the Mediterranean region. The event, in association with Romar Trading and Arion Wine Company, marked the official opening of Ike's Bistro named

after the resort's late founder, Ike Cohen, who is credited with the introduction of gourmet dining to the island as early as the 60s, when he arrived here and opened the Talk of the Town Hotel. □



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Inglot cosmetics now open in Aruba



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their beauty. Our unique Freedom System allows customers to experiment with countless shades and color combinations of different face products, giving them the opportunity to create their own customized color palette. Makeup ranges from nail enamel, after care products, lipsticks matte and gloss, powder eye shadow in all its diversities and the one of a kind attention. Renowned magazines have mentioned Inglot as a must have for the ladies time and time again by leading beauty experts, such as VOGUE, ELLE, COSMOPOLITAN, Marie Claire



and many more. Inglot currently present in 300 retail locations worldwide, now open in the beautiful island of Aruba to cater to the beautiful island ladies and their specific needs. With make-up made keeping in mind the complexion and ethnic types of the Caribbean. It's sister store now open for 1 year in Willemstad, Curacao now joins in the shopping must of the island. Store is located in Emmastraat #3 (next to Hugo Boss) in a two floor store for everyone to come visit. You are invited to come by for your one of a kind gifts and customer attention. □



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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had a interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the Westin Resort, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 9 am to 1 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort



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Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel poses with the Heisman Trophy after becoming the first freshman to win the college football award, Saturday, Dec. 8, 2012, in New York. Associated Press

A&M's Johnny Football is AP's Player of the Year

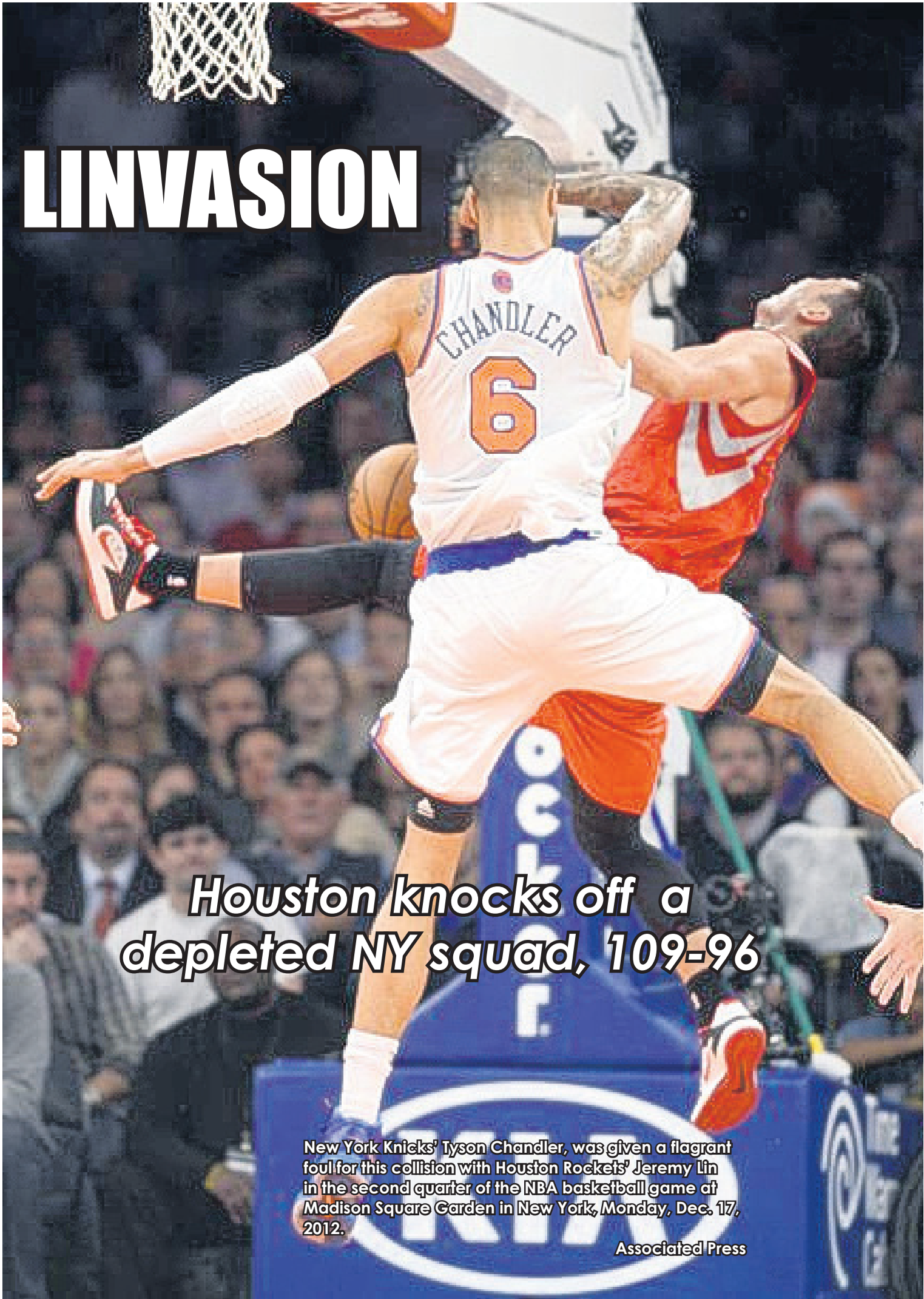
By KRISTIE RIEKEN
AP Sports Writer

Johnny Manziel ran for almost 1,700 yards and 30 touchdowns as a dual-threat quarterback his senior year of high school at Kerrville Tivy.

Who would have thought he'd be even more impressive at Texas A&M when pitted against the defenses of the Southeastern Conference?

On Tuesday, Manziel picked up another major award for his spectacular debut season. He was voted The Associated Press Player of the Year. As with the Heisman Trophy and Davey O'Brien Award that Manziel already won, the QB nicknamed Johnny Football is the first freshman to collect the AP award. Manziel's 31 votes were more than twice that of second place finisher Manti Te'o, Notre Dame's start linebacker.

Continued on Page 20



Houston knocks off a depleted NY squad, 109-96

New York Knicks' Tyson Chandler, was given a flagrant foul for this collision with Houston Rockets' Jeremy Lin in the second quarter of the NBA basketball game at Madison Square Garden in New York, Monday, Dec. 17, 2012.

Associated Press

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Armstrong stripped of BBC award after drugs probe

LONDON (AP) — Lance Armstrong has been stripped of a prestigious BBC award in the wake of the doping scandal that cost the American cyclist his seven Tour de France titles and smeared his reputation.

Armstrong won the British broadcaster's Overseas Sports Personality of the Year prize in 2003 after capturing his final Tour victory, but his name was absent from the list of previous

winners in the program for the 2012 event. The BBC says in a statement that it took the decision "following the UCI's decision to strip Lance Armstrong of his Tour de France titles."

A U.S. Anti-Doping Agency report in October implicated Armstrong and his teams in a widespread drugs program, leading to him being banned from cycling for life. □



In this Feb. 15, 2011, file photo, Lance Armstrong pauses during an interview in Austin, Texas. Associated Press

Cuban boxer Mesa dies; won silver at Atlanta '96

HAVANA (AP) — Cuban authorities say Olympic silver-medalist boxer Arnaldo Mesa has died. He was 46. Government-run sports website Jit.cu says Mesa died Monday in the eastern city of Holguin, several days after he was hospitalized for a stroke.

Mesa, a southpaw, was born Dec. 6, 1966, in the eastern province of Santiago.

In 1996 he was runner-up in the bantamweight class at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. He won a gold medal at the Panamerican Games in 1991, in Havana, and again four years later in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

His funeral is planned for Wednesday. □



Hirscher wins night slalom, moves to second overall

ANDREW DAMPF

AP Sports Writer

MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO, Italy (AP) — Defending overall World Cup champion Marcel Hirscher of Austria was fastest in both runs to post an emphatic victory in a night slalom on Tuesday that was marred by the death of a gate keeper.

The win moved Hirscher past American rival Ted Ligety into second place in the overall standings. Under the lights with thousands of fans lining the course, Hirscher clocked a two-run combined time of 1 minute, 42.50 seconds. Felix Neureuther of Germany finished second, a distant 1.67 seconds behind, and Naoki Yuasa of Japan was third, 2.28 back.

Yuasa put down a blistering second run to move up from 26th after the first leg. It was the first podium finish for the 29-year-old, in his ninth season on the circuit. "He's a real fighter," Hirscher said of Yuasa, who had trouble walking after his run due to a back problem. Until Hirscher and Neureuther skied last in the second run, racer after racer failed to match Yuasa on the bottom section of the Canalone Miramonti course, which features gradients of up to 60 percent. While the course was firm and icy, large ruts that built up after each skier came



Austria's Marcel Hirscher, winner of an Alpine ski men's World Cup night slalom, celebrates on the podium in Madonna di Campiglio, Italy, Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012

Associated Press

down made it difficult for racers to maintain their balance.

But Hirscher attacked all the way and vastly improved on his 0.06 advantage from the opening leg — then slammed into the protective padding in the finish area out of exhaustion.

"I risked a lot and also was very lucky. It was really tough today," Hirscher said. "When you have the right setup, it's really cool here. It was so cool."

Yuasa said he was in agony due to the back problem.

"It was so bad that I can't recall my last six gates," he said. "I still can't believe all that happened today — nobody believed I could ski

like this with the pain. It's difficult to say how I was able to ski like I did in the second run ... But this is my job and as long as I can make my way until the bottom of a course I will try to ski and do my best."

The race marked the World Cup's return to Madonna Di Campiglio after a seven-year break. Fans lined most of the course and despite temperatures firmly below freezing there was a festive atmosphere, with the finish area nearly in the center of town.

Ligety, who has dominated in giant slalom this season but hasn't reached the podium in slalom in five seasons, finished ninth. □

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NBA Capsules

Lin leads Rockets' rout in return to New York

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jeremy Lin won again at Madison Square Garden — and for the first time this season, the New York Knicks didn't. Lin had 22 points and eight assists in his return to New York, leading the Houston Rockets to a 109-96 victory Monday night that ended the Knicks' 10-game home winning streak to open the season. Cheered then jeered, and later clobbered, Lin added another masterpiece to the ones he put together last season during the height of Linsanity. No longer the fan favorite he was when wearing the home uniform, Lin got a mixed reception when he left the game with 2:25 remaining and Houston leading by 16.

James Harden had 28 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets, who blew out the Knicks for the second time this season. They have won the last seven meetings, including a 131-103 rout in Houston on Nov. 23. Rookie Chris Copeland scored a career-high 29 points for the Knicks, who played without leading scorer Carmelo Anthony and had their four-game winning streak snapped.

THUNDER 107, SPURS 93
OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Serge Ibaka tied his career best with 25 points and grabbed a season-high 17 rebounds, and Oklahoma City beat San Antonio for its 11th straight win.

The Thunder took control with a string of 11 straight points during the third quarter, punctuated by Nick Collison's putback that made it 71-56 with 4:27 remaining in the period.

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich kept his starters parked on the bench throughout

the fourth quarter, even as San Antonio cut an 18-point lead in half with about 5½ minutes left.

Tony Parker and Nando De Colo had 14 points apiece to lead the Spurs, who could have created a virtual tie for the best record with a win.

Manu Ginobili did not play for the Spurs because he bruised his left quadriceps in Saturday's win at Boston. Russell Westbrook chipped in 22 points and nine assists, Kevin Martin scored 20 and Kevin Durant had 19 as Oklahoma City maintained sole possession of the best record in the NBA.

It was the teams' first meeting in Oklahoma City since

the Thunder overcame a 2-0 deficit in the Western Conference finals by winning the next four games. The Spurs drew a measure of revenge in the season opener by beating Oklahoma City on Parker's jumper as time expired.

GRIZZLIES 80, BULLS 71

MEMPHIS, Tennessee (AP) — Mike Conley had 17 points, Zach Randolph added 10 points and 15 rebounds, and Memphis overcame a poor start to beat Chicago. Conley was 6 of 12 from the field and had four assists. Rudy Gay scored 12 points for the Grizzlies but shot 5 of 13, continuing his slump. Wayne Ellington scored all 11 of his points in the sec-



Houston Rockets' Jeremy Lin, left, drives on New York Knicks' Raymond Felton in the first quarter of an NBA basketball game at Madison Square Garden in New York, Monday, Dec. 17, 2012. Associated Press

ond quarter, when the Grizzlies reserves provided a lift

after Memphis shot poorly in the first period. □



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Hainsey looking for NHL labor talks to resume soon

By IRA PODELL

AP Sports Writer
NEW YORK (AP) -

Winnipeg Jets defenseman Ron Hainsey is getting antsy. Not only is he anxious to get back to the bargaining table with the NHL, he really wants to be on the ice with his teammates. Just not at all costs and not without the right deal. As part of the negotiating committee for the players' association, Hainsey has kept busy during the lockout by taking part in the ongoing talks with the NHL. But ongoing is now a relative term, because nothing has been going on between the sides since talks broke down again last week, despite the presence of a federal mediator for two days in New Jersey. "We've said it a number of times, but it's worth repeating: It's obviously very difficult to make a deal if you're not meeting or negotiating," Hainsey told The Associated Press in a telephone interview Tuesday. "I've yet to see a way we can do it without sitting down across a table from each other." Two weeks ago, progress



Winnipeg Jets' Ron Hainsey, left, Anaheim Ducks' Daniel Winnik, center, and Chicago Blackhawks' Chris Campoli listen as NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman and deputy commissioner Bill Daly speak to reporters, Thursday, Dec. 6, 2012, in New York.

Associated Press

was made during several consecutive days of negotiations between players and owners in New York. The sides disagree on how close they might have moved toward a deal, but a major breakdown at the end wrecked any hope for a fast solution. Since then, there's been no collective bargaining

agreement in sight and no talks were planned as of Tuesday afternoon. "Nothing scheduled at this point," Hainsey said. "We've always said we're open to sit down and meet any time, and now we're kind of in a situation where no one wants to make the first move. Maybe there is a way of doing it.

Communication the past couple of days has been quiet. Maybe there is some way to get it started with something similar to what we had (in New York)." Players' association executive director Donald Fehr declared then that an agreement was in reach, a notion that was quickly knocked down by NHL Com-

missioner Gary Bettman after the union declined to accept three non-negotiable points. When the offer wasn't unconditionally accepted, the league turned down the union's proposal and withdrew any offers it had made. "We've had a few weeks where we worked all week leading up to Thursday and Friday, and it looks like we're gathering momentum, and then had some setbacks," the 31-year-old Hainsey said. "Those things make it a bit more difficult. On both sides you get a feeling that you're making momentum and getting closer, and then you take a step backward. Then things quiet down for a couple of days, and someone has to pick up the phone and re-engage and figure out a forum. "Personally, I would like to believe that this is not a personal thing or an anger thing. This is the business side of hockey. It's not easy, I've learned that through doing it." The lockout reached its 94th day Tuesday, and all games have been canceled through Dec. 30. □

Johnny Football

Continued from Page 17

He is the third straight Heisman-winning quarterback to receive the honor, following Robert Griffin III and Cam Newton. Manziel erased initial doubts about his ability when he ran for 60 yards and a score in his first game against Florida. "I knew I could run the ball, I did it a lot in high school," Manziel said in an interview with the AP. "It is just something that you don't get a chance to see in the spring. Quarterbacks aren't live in the spring. You don't get to tackle. You don't get to evade some of the sacks that you would in normal game situations. So I feel like when I was able to avoid getting tackled, it opened some people's eyes a little bit more."

The 6-foot-1 Manziel threw for 3,419 yards and 24 touchdowns and ran for 1,181 yards and 19 more scores to help the Aggies win 10 games for the first time since 1998 - and in their inaugural SEC year, too. Ryan Tannehill, Manziel's predecessor now with the Dolphins after being drafted eighth overall this season, saw promise from the young quarterback last year when he was redshirted. But even he is surprised at how quickly things came together for Manziel. "It's pretty wild. I always thought he had that play-making ability, that something special where if somebody came free, he can make something exciting happen," Tannehill said. "I wasn't really sure if, I don't think anyone was sure if he was going to be able to carry that throughout an SEC season, and



In this Nov. 17, 2012, file photo, Texas A&M's Johnny Manziel rolls out to throw a touchdown pass during the first quarter of an NCAA college football game against Sam Houston State in College Station, Texas.

Associated Press

he's shocked the world and he did it." After Manziel sat out as a redshirt in 2011, Texas A&M's scheduled season-opener against Louisiana Tech this year was postponed because of Hurri-

cane Isaac. That left him to get his first taste of live defense in almost two years against Florida. He responded well, helping the Aggies race to a 17-7 lead early using both his arm and his feet. The Ga-

tors shut down Manziel and A&M's offense in the second half and Texas A&M lost 20-17. But Manziel's performance was enough for Texas A&M's coaching staff to realize that his scrambling ability was going to be a big part of what the Aggies could do this season. "The first half really showed that I was a little bit more mobile than we had seen throughout the spring," Manziel said. "Me and (then-offensive coordinator) Kliff Kingsbury sat down and really said: 'Hey we can do some things with my feet as well as throwing the ball.' And it added a little bit of a new dimension." Manziel knew that the biggest adjustment from playing in high school to college would be the speed of the game. Exactly how quick players in the SEC were was still a jolt to the quarterback. □



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NFL Roundup

Titans end Jets' playoff hopes with 14-10 win

TERESA M. WALKER

AP Sports Writer

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) —

Chris Johnson went 94 yards for the longest touchdown run in the NFL since 2006 as the Tennessee Titans beat the Jets 14-10 on Monday to eliminate New York from playoff contention.

Jake Locker's first touchdown run of the season put Tennessee ahead late in the third quarter and the Titans intercepted four passes by a struggling Mark Sanchez to snap a three-game skid.

After bumbling around all night, the Jets somehow still had a chance to win when they took over at the Tennessee 25 with 47 seconds left following a 19-yard punt by Brett Kern. But Sanchez fumbled a low shotgun snap, Bilal Powell inadvertently kicked the ball away and the Titans recovered to seal it.

It was a fitting end to an ugly game that left New York coach Rex Ryan cursing to himself as he walked off the field.

The Jets (6-8) needed to win their final three games and get help elsewhere to earn a playoff spot. Instead, the Titans sacked



Tennessee Titans running back Chris Johnson (28) runs for a 94-yard touchdown against the New York Jets in the second quarter of an NFL football game, Monday, Dec. 17, 2012, in Nashville, Tenn. (AP)

Associated Press

Sanchez three times and got a fourth on Tim Tebow. Jason McCourty and Michael Griffin each had two interceptions, keeping New York out of the playoffs for a second straight season after reaching consecutive AFC title games.

Johnson, with the names of the victims of Friday's shootings in Connecticut written on his cleats, ran a club-record 94 yards for a TD in the second quarter. Locker's 13-yard touchdown run at the end of the third put the Titans (5-9) ahead to stay. The Jets took a 10-7 lead when Sanchez and Jeff Cumberland connected on a 17-yard touchdown pass with 3:19 to go in the third. The Titans responded on their next possession with Locker's quarterback keeper around left end, capping a seven-play, 64-yard drive.

On Cumberland's touchdown, the Jets' tight end caught a third-and-12 pass at about the 5-yard line after getting behind Titans

linebacker Tim Shaw, starting in place of injured defensive captain Colin McCarthy. Cumberland headed into the end zone from there.

The Jets began that drive at the Titans 35 after Kern shanked a 30-yard punt. Kern had been one of the few steady performers this season for the Titans.

The Titans had a 7-3 halftime lead after Johnson's long scamper in the second quarter. His touchdown run was the longest by any NFL player since Minnesota's Chester Taylor had a 95-yard TD in a 31-13 victory over the Seattle Seahawks on Oct. 22, 2006.

After Robert Malone's 53-yard punt backed the Titans up to their own 5-yard line, Johnson rushed for 1 yard on first down. On the next play, he found a seam up the middle and appeared untouched on his way to the end zone.

Jets safety Jeremiah Bell chased Johnson most of the way and made an un-

successful diving attempt to tackle him from behind inside the 15.

The previous record for the longest run in franchise history was 91 yards, a mark shared by Johnson and Sid Blanks. Johnson had a 91-yard run against the Houston Texans in 2009. Blanks also did it against the Jets in 1964.

This marked Johnson's sixth career touchdown run of at least 80 yards, giving him twice as many as anyone else in NFL history. Barry Sanders, Ahman Green, Hugh McElhenny and O.J. Simpson each had three touchdown runs of at least 80 yards. □



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Hair of the Dog



By: Dr. Carlos Viana

The Holidays are upon us and for many of us that means parties with lots of alcohol. Drinking alcohol in moderation can be fun and sociable, but, is alcohol healthy?

A Danish study found that "Wine drinkers had significantly lower mortality from both coronary heart disease and cancer than did non-wine drinkers." Beer and other alcohol drinkers enjoyed a smaller benefit.

This is good news for some; drinking with the doctor's permission! But wait; if you are not a drinker or suffer from liver disease, gastritis, or high blood pressure, it's not a good idea to start drinking alcohol for the health benefits. However, if you enjoy an occasional drink and are otherwise healthy, go back and read the first paragraph. Drinking "in moderation" is the key. The benefits are only effective when keeping to the recommended levels. To work the right way, alcohol intake should be spread over the whole week and binge sessions, like at a party should be avoided.

According to the

American Heart Association (AHA), moderate is defined as 2 drinks a day if you're a male 65 and younger, or 1 drink a day if you're a female or a male 66 and older. 1 drink means 12 oz of beer, 4 oz of wine, 1.5 oz of 80-proof hard liquor, or 1 oz of 100-proof liquor.

Unfortunately, for many having a good time means doing everything to excess which includes overindulgence in alcohol consumption and the ensuing effect of a hangover. A hangover is the result of a combination of alcohol toxicity, dehydration, and Vitamin A, B and C depletion all caused by alcohol metabolism on your system. The symptoms are usually a dry mouth, nausea, fatigue; dizziness and headache.

Over the years there have been many folk remedies for hangovers. Some of these "cures" come with the toast "The hair of the dog that bit me"! The homeopathic principle of "like cures like" advice given literally in ancient times, "If a dog bites you, put a hair of the dog into the wound" this was distorted to imply that drinking more alcohol would help your hangover.

Apart from the obvious effects, during a hangover you are suffering the effects of a mild overdose of a depressant drug, your nerves are reacting and you have also flushed vitamins and nutrients from your system causing a shock that your body is struggling to fix. This is why hangover symptoms often

include disorientation and "the jitters".

Alcohol enters cells and is broken down into a toxin. Your liver converts this toxin into ammonia and acetic acid, which is non-toxic and can be used by your body for energy. By the way, the other name for acetic acid is vinegar! In a hangover ammonia is metabolized in the brain which has only a limited capacity to remove the excess ammonia coming in.

For those of you really partying to overload who include cocaine the news gets worse. Alcohol and cocaine form a product in your body called cocaethylene. Abusers know that higher alcohol concentrations lead to higher blood cocaine levels. However, high levels of alcohol slow down cocaine metabolism. This slow down may explain why users feel an enhanced euphoria when using the drugs in combination. Regrettably, the risk a sudden death from a heart attack is greatly increased.

So what is a partygoer to do? The best advice is to drink alcohol IN MODERATION avoiding binge drinking, and take red wine in preference to other alcoholic drinks. It's not necessary to have an alcoholic beverage in hand during an entire party. We enjoy sparkling water with a lime between glasses of red wine when socializing. Always eat something either before or while you are drinking. If you have drunk large quantities of alcohol, drink plenty of water afterwards. This will counteract dehydration. Rather than drink coffee the morning after a drinking session, a breakfast consisting of

complex carbohydrates, a whole grain cereal right for your metabolic type, a glass of fresh fruit juice and a cup of green tea should bring your blood sugar level up to an acceptable level and help to rehydrate your body.

What not to do! Do not drink alcohol to try to neutralize your hangover. Bloody Mary's only make you progressively more useless as you drink more of them and slow down the healing process of your body. Do not waste your time with aspirin that will destroy your liver if combined with alcohol. Aspirin can cause sudden death at any time. So prevalent is death by aspirin that in the US that many aspirin induced deaths are listed on "cause" as "natural". Alcohol damages the liver; and aspirin damages the liver; but if you mix the two, the damage is much worse.

The most important natural supplement for a hangover is mineral water that helps rehydrate your body. Natural supplements that help neutralize alcohol byproducts and protect cells against the damaging effects of alcohol include vitamin C, B Complex, folic Acid, the amino acids SAME and glutathione, vitamin E, and selenium. We like to take extra vitamin C & B complex with a liter/qt of water before an evening of festivities. If more help is needed, we provide colon-hydro therapy in our clinic which can help flush out toxins and re-hydrate the body quickly.

Get The Point! The Holidays should be spent reconnecting with family and friends in a festive exchange. In ancient

times, putting "the hair of the dog that bit you into the wound" did not help prevent infection. Nothing is said about the dog biting you twice as you try to get some of its hair; which is what will happen if you try to cure your hangover with more alcohol. If the festivities have come back to bite you, or you are just looking for healthy ways to celebrate, we are open throughout the season to help you. Salud, Santé, Cheers, To Your Health!

CARLOS VIANA, Ph. D. is an Oriental Medical Doctor (O.M.D.) having studied in Shanghai, China; a Board Cert. Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.), a fellow member of the Board Certified Association of Addiction Professionals (C.Ad.), the Chairperson of the Latin American Committee of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), a Rejuvenating Cell Therapist and specializes in Anti-Aging Medicine, has a weekly radio program, writes and lectures extensively. For information: VIANA NATURAL HEALING CENTER NV, Kibaima 7, Aruba, TEL: 585-1270 FAX: 585-4789, Web Sight: www.vianaheal.com GIVE THE GIFT OF HEALTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON! *Gift Certificates & Health Products Available * Dr. Viana's BOOK: Prescriptions from Paradise, Introduction to Biocompatible Medicine - Available at local Bookstores, Hotel Gift shops and Boticas. Signed copies at Viana Healing Center, Ebook Holiday Special at www.amazon.com, check for Events at: [facebook.com/vianahealingcenter](https://www.facebook.com/vianahealingcenter) □

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Facebook users hit 'like,' stores jump into action

CANDICE CHOI
CHRISTINA REXRODE
Associated Press
NEW YORK (AP) — Facebook isn't just for goofy pictures and silly chatter. Whether shoppers know it or not, their actions online help dictate what's in stores during this holiday season. After polling customers on the social media site, Macy's decided to carry denim jeans in bright neon hues rather than pastels. Wal-Mart for the first time decided to let customers vote on which toys they want discounted. And to better plan orders for the decorative flags she sells, a small business owner in Mississippi is running a contest that encourages customers to chime in about how they're decorating their homes this winter.

The impact of social media on a company's bottom line is tough to quantify, with no hard data on how millions of Facebook fans and Twitter followers translate into sales for stores. But during the holiday shopping season, a roughly two-month period when retailers can make up to 40 percent of their annual revenue, stores are uncovering a valuable use for all the seemingly useless online muttering: market research. The result is that whenever folks press the "like" button to give their seal of approval for a particular company's page or make a comment on how much they like the leather boots they just bought, they're helping everyone from independently-owned small shops

to the biggest U.S. retailers make decisions about what products to stock up on, what to play up on the sales floor and what promotions to offer online. For the first time this year, one of Macy's Inc.'s apparel buyers suggested the company solicit feedback on Facebook on which colors it should stock for "Else" brand jeans in the fall ahead of the holiday shopping season. Several weeks later, with about 2,500 "likes" and 750 comments, "Very Vivid" colors in bright blue, orange and red were declared the victor over softer shades such as baby pink and baby blue. The company, which has more than 9 million "likes" on Facebook, followed up with another poll in July on whether it should carry a "Kensie" brand dress in a bird or floral print. Rather than simply using social media to tout promotions and new products, companies are just now realizing the value of making customers feel as though they're part of the decision making process, said Jennifer Kasper, who heads digital media at Macy's. In addition to making customers feel like insiders, she said it helps businesses better tailor their offers as well. Matt Cronin, a founding partner of Web Liquid Group, a digital marketing agency, agreed that companies are still in the early stages of figuring out how to put their social media profiles to use. Until now, he noted that social media strategies have primar-

ily been about capturing as many followers or fans as possible without really knowing where to go from there. One hurdle for major retailers is that it's difficult to take the information they learn online and put it to use while the trends are still relevant, said Nicolas Franchet, head of retail e-commerce at Facebook. That's one of the trickier aspects of Wal-Mart Store Inc.'s new "Toyland Tuesday" contest, which lets fans vote on which of two toys will be discounted on the following Tuesday. Once a winner is declared on Thursday, the retailer acts quickly to inform its 4,000 stores of how to adjust pricing and displays, says Wanda Young, senior director of social media for Wal-Mart, which has more than 25 million likes on Facebook. Although it's the first time Wal-Mart is letting shoppers have a direct say in what merchandise gets discounted, the retailer is learning to use social media in more discreet ways as well. Last year, Wal-Mart, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, acquired an analytics company called Kosmix that monitors online chatter to try and predict what products might suddenly become popular. The unit, now called (at) Walmartlabs, suggested that the retailer give juicers prominent display for the holidays last year, after a movie about an obese man who lost weight on a juice diet started trending online. □



This undated screenshot of Macy's online shopping website made available to the Associated Press shows how social media is integrated into their online store.
Associated Press

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Stocks surge on optimism that a budget deal is near

STEVE ROTHWELL

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks climbed on Wall Street Tuesday, pushing the Standard and Poor's 500 to its highest level in two months, on optimism that lawmakers are closing in on a budget deal that will stop the U.S. from going over the "fiscal cliff" at the beginning of next year.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 115.57 points, or 0.9 percent, to 13,350.96, its biggest one-day gain in almost a month. The Standard & Poor's 500 rose 16.43 points to 1,446.79, its highest close since Oct. 18. The Nasdaq composite rose 43.93 points to 3,054.53.

House Speaker John Boehner told reporters he remains hopeful that a fiscal cliff compromise can be reached, but says President

Barack Obama has yet to offer a balanced deficit-cutting plan. Boehner said Obama's latest offer for \$1.3 trillion in tax increases over the next decade with \$850 billion in spending cuts is not enough. The White House says that President Obama has moved halfway to meet Boehner on a budget deal. "People are cheering the prospect for some compromise in Washington right now," said Joe Costigan, director of equity research at Bryn Mawr Trust Co. "At the moment there is some pretty good news and the market is reacting favorably to it, but the deal isn't done yet."

Stocks slumped after the presidential election Nov. 6 on concern that a divided government would struggle to reach an agreement before Jan. 1, when a series of



Trader Robert Vella, right, works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Stocks edged higher on Wall Street amid optimism that the lawmakers in Washington are closing in on a budget deal that will stop the U.S. going over the "fiscal cliff."
 (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

series of tax increases and government spending cuts are scheduled to take effect if no deal is reached. Those measures could push the

U.S. back into recession. The S&P 500 has since recouped all of those losses. Some investors say stocks are already pricing in too

much optimism. Any deal, while ensuring that the economy avoids the full impact of the "fiscal cliff," will still involve higher taxes and less government spending. That will be a drag on economic growth, said David Wright, a managing director and co-founder at Sierra Investment Management in Santa Monica, California. "There are just too many naive people thinking that the agreement itself is a significant event — it isn't," Wright said. "The implementation is going to be negative for the economy." Stocks added to their gains after the Standard & Poor's rating agency said at midday that it had raised Greece's credit grade by six notches to B-, lifting the country out of default.

The threat of a Greek default had roiled markets in the first half of this year. Investors worried that the heavily indebted nation would leave the euro, opening the way for a break-up of the currency block. The ratings firm said the upgrade reflected its view that the other 16 countries using the euro are determined to keep the Greece inside the currency union.

The Dow Jones is up 2.5 percent in December and is on track to close higher for a fourth straight year. The index has advanced 9 percent in 2012. The S&P 500 is also up for the year, gaining 15 percent. □

Oracle 2Q earnings rise 18%; tech spending up

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Oracle says its latest quarterly earnings rose 18 percent as companies splurged on more software and other technology toward the end of the year. The results announced Tuesday are an improvement from Oracle's previous quarter, when the company's revenue dipped slightly from a year earlier. The latest quarter spanned September through November. That makes Oracle the first technology bellwether to



Oracle's terminal at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York City.
 (Handout Photo)

provide insights into corporate spending since the Nov. 6 re-election of President Barack Obama and negotiations to avoid the so-called fiscal cliff began to heat up. Oracle Corp. earned \$2.6 billion, or 53 cents per share, in its fiscal second quarter. That compares with net income of \$2.2 billion, or 43 cents per share, last year. Revenue increased 3 percent to \$9.1 billion. Oracle is based in Redwood Shores, California. □



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Judge denies Apple request to ban Samsung phones

PAUL ELIAS

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal judge has rejected Apple Inc.'s demands that its chief rival in the more than \$100 billion global smartphone market cease selling models a jury recently found illegally used Apple technology.

The immediate impact of the ruling means that Samsung can continue to sell three of the older-generation smartphones still on U.S. shelves that a San Jose jury in August found ripped off technology Apple used to create its iPhone.

The jury ordered Samsung to pay Apple \$1.05 billion after it found the South Korean titan "infringed" several of Apple's patents in creating 26 products — three of which are still being sold in the United States.

U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh



noted in her ruling that Samsung claims to have "worked around" using different technology than the Apple patents found to have been infringed such as the iPhone's popular "pinch to zoom" feature.

And even if that's a false claim, the judge ruled, Apple's demands to yank the Samsung products from U.S. shelves and bar future sales was too broad of a punishment in devices built with technology backed by hundreds of patents each. "The phones at issue in this case contain a

broad range of features, only a small fraction of which are covered by Apple's patents," Koh wrote in her ruling issued late Monday night. "Though Apple does have some interest in retaining certain features as exclusive to Apple, it does not follow that entire products must be forever banned from the market because they incorporate, among their myriad features, a few narrow protected functions."

The judge also concluded that the public would be harmed if she ordered a ban. "Though the phones do contain infringing features, they contain a far greater number of non-infringing features to which consumers would no longer have access if this Court were to issue an injunction," the judge wrote. "The public interest does not support

removing phones from the market when the infringing components constitute such limited parts of complex, multi-featured products." At the same time, the judge also rejected Samsung's call for a new trial because of alleged juror misconduct.

Samsung had alleged jury foreman Velvin Hogan committed misconduct for failing to disclose that his former employer Seagate Technology filed a lawsuit against him in 1993. Samsung later acquired nearly 10 percent of Seagate.

Samsung alleged after the trial that Hogan had a bias against it because of its ownership stake in Seagate, a Northern Cal-

ifornia-based maker of computer hard drives.

The judge said Samsung had the ability to investigate whether Hogan was biased toward Samsung before trial started because the company's lawyer possessed Hogan's bankruptcy file, which included the lawsuit. She said Samsung objected too late to Hogan's joining the jury.

"What changed between Samsung's initial decision not to pursue questioning, or investigation of Mr. Hogan, and Samsung's later decision to investigate was simple: the jury found against Samsung, and made a very large damages award," the judge ruled. □

US homebuilder confidence at 6 1/2-year high

ALEX VEIGA

AP Real Estate Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Confidence among U.S. homebuilders inched up this month, to the highest level in more than six and a half years, as builders reported the best market for newly built homes since the housing boom.

The National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo builder sentiment index released Tuesday increased 2 points to 47 from a revised 45 in November. That's the highest reading since April 2006, just before the housing bubble burst.

Readings below 50 suggest negative sentiment about the housing market. The last time the index was at or above that level was in April 2006, with a reading of 51. It has been trending

higher since October 2011, when it stood at 17.

The latest index, which is based on responses from 441 builders, reflects growing optimism that a turnaround in housing will endure after years of stagnation.

"While there is still much room for improvement, the consistent upward trend in builder confidence over the past year is indicative of the gradual recovery that has been taking place in housing markets nationwide and that we expect to continue in 2013," said David Crowe, the NAHB's chief economist.

A component of the latest builder confidence survey that measures current sales conditions rose 2 points to 51, the highest level since April 2006. A gauge of traf-

fic by prospective buyers increased 1 point to 36, also the highest reading since April 2006.

However, the index tracking builders' outlook for sales over the next six months slipped 1 point to 51, back to where it was two months ago. More people have started looking to buy homes, encouraged by a gradually improving economy, a steady rise in home values and mortgage rates that have been low all year. At the same time, the inventory of previously occupied homes available for sale has fallen sharply, reducing the competition for newly built homes. Sales of new homes fell slightly last month, dragged lower by steep declines in the Northeast partly related to Superstorm Sandy. □



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8			6				5
1			4				9
	8	9	7			4	
			9			2	
			1		5		
			3		7		
	2	3			4		

Difficulty Level ★★

12/19

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

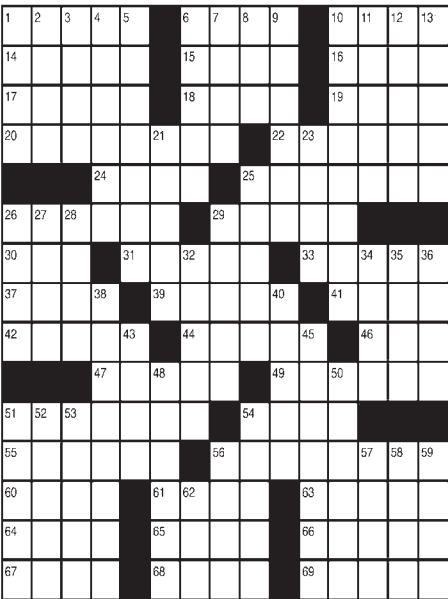
8	9	7	4	5	2	6	3	1
4	3	6	8	1	9	7	5	2
1	2	5	3	7	6	4	8	9
5	8	4	6	2	1	3	9	7
6	7	3	9	4	8	1	2	5
2	1	9	5	3	7	8	6	4
7	4	8	2	9	3	5	1	6
9	6	1	7	8	5	2	4	3
3	5	2	1	6	4	9	7	8

ACROSS

- Shirt parts that cover the wrists
- Pencil contents
- Baseball sticks
- Leaning
- Jealousy
- Arkin or Alda
- Actor Willem
- Genesis garden
- Late Kennedy matriarch
- Wool gatherers
- Clever; sharp
- Very small
- Burn after the flame is out
- Red tape
- Task
- Geisha's sash
- Hot bit of coal
- Old anesthetic
- up with; tolerates
- Alpine goatherd song
- Record
- wool; Brillo material
- Traffic cop's device
- Cheap container
- Potato or yam
- Choose
- Break into smithereens
- Mexican dollar
- Pear variety
- Visitor
- Not constant; changeable
- Prefix for room or chamber
- Slightly open
- "Turkey in the ..."
- Wild hog
- top; sleeveless shirt
- Motif
- Gentlemen
- Needle holes
- Seamstress

DOWN

- Scoundrels
- "Beehive State"



Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

CARE	CHAFE	SLIP
OPEN	HOARD	LACE
MEAT	APHID	AMAN
EXPENSE	AILMENT	
RAM	CREAM	
LEVEE	SLY	BEACH
AVID	LEO	CORNEA
BAR	SECULAR	DAB
EDGING	DUB	DESI
LEONE	REX	RESET
	RAPID	MAT
REVOKED	WATERED	
AREA	EDGAR	SIDE
KIND	KLINE	STONE
ENDS	SENDS	STAR

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12/19/12

- Old stringed instrument
- Opposes; will not submit to
- Bawl out
- Find disgusting
- Crusty wound coverings
- Asian capital
- Church table
- Rosa or Bert
- Weathercock
- Make tea
- Like a poor excuse
- Pitcher
- Blue; pretty songbird

Cayman lawmakers oust premier a week after arrest

DAVID McFADDEN

Associated Press

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — Lawmakers voted Tuesday to remove this British territory's premier in a parliamentary vote of no-confidence a week after he was arrested on suspicion of misconduct.

Governing party, opposition and independent legislators joined in voting 11-3 in favor of the motion. It effectively ended McKeever Bush's role as head of government for the Cayman Islands, a three-island Caribbean territory that is the world's sixth largest financial center and a major haven for mutual funds and private equity. The 11 lawmakers who backed Bush's ouster had called on the House speaker earlier in the day to summon the emergency session for a debate on Bush, who rejected calls to resign after being questioned by police investigators for two days last week. There was no immediate comment from Bush or his chief of staff. The premier abstained from the vote.

It was uncertain whether the splintered governing party could form a new government or whether parliament would have to be dissolved to pave the way for early elections. A vote has been scheduled for May.

Before the special session, Education Min-

ister Rolston Anglin told The Associated Press that a majority of Bush's parliamentary bloc of eight had asked him to step down and allow the police investigations to continue without any appearance of conflict. He said the premier rebuffed his colleagues during meetings in recent days. "This whole matter has created tremendous uncertainty in our country. There has also been a loud outcry from our populace to put this matter behind us. We cannot allow that to continue any longer," said Anglin, an accountant who helped Bush found the United Democratic Party in 2001. Police have said the probes into Bush involve suspected theft related to misuse of a government credit card and breach of trust, abuse of office and conflict of interest for the alleged importation of explosive substances without valid permits. He has not been charged with anything.

Bush has described the investigations as part of a "very vindictive" political plot to destroy his reputation and career.

The lawmakers behind the no-confidence vote included Deputy Premier Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, who could potentially become premier if the ruling party is able to form a new government or patch together a ruling coalition. □

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Arbitrator: Beauty queen defamed pageant, owes \$5M

NEW YORK (AP) — A beauty queen who claimed this year's Miss USA contest was fixed has been ordered to pay the pageant organization \$5 million for defamation.

In a decision signed last week, an arbitrator found that the comments from Miss Pennsylvania USA Sheena Monnin were false, harmful and malicious. Monnin had alleged that the five finalists had been selected in advance of the pageant's live telecast. The arbitrator, Theodore Katz, said Monnin had two motives: "She was a disgruntled contestant who failed to make it past the preliminary competition" and she objected to the pageant's decision to allow transgender contestants. He wrote that the way the contest is judged "precludes any reasonable possibility that the judging was rigged."

Monnin, of Cranberry, Pennsylvania, resigned her state title after the pageant. Her allegations on Facebook and NBC's "To-



In this Wednesday, May 30, 2012 file photo provided by the Miss Universe Organization, Miss Pennsylvania Sheena Monnin competes during the 2012 Miss USA Presentation Show in Las Vegas.

Associated Press.

day" show cost the pageant a \$5 million fee from a potential 2013 sponsor, Katz said.

Monnin's lawyer, Richard Klineburger III, had no comment on the decision, his office said. □

Connecticut school shooting compels Hollywood changes

DAVID BAUDER
AP Television Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The Connecticut school shooting compelled Hollywood to air disclaimers before violent television shows, swap some programs for others, cancel film openings and present somber specials on daytime TV shows that are usually more focused on entertainment.

The responses came in addition to news specials on Friday's killing of 27 people, most of them school children, in Newtown, Connecticut, by a gunman who later took his own life. Showtime gave its viewers a special warning Sunday before the season finales of the thriller series "Homeland," and "Dexter," a series about a serial killer.

"In light of the tragedy that has occurred in Connecticut, the following program contains images that may be disturbing," said the disclaimer before both programs.

Another cable network, HBO, postponed airings of the 2012 crime thriller "Contraband" over the weekend. The film with Mark Wahlberg and Kate Beckinsale was replaced by airings of "Crazy, Stupid Love" and the remake of "Arthur," the network said. The Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York canceled Monday's screening of Tom Cruise's violent new movie, "Jack Reacher," that was to include a conversation with the actor. A scheduled premiere of the movie in Pittsburgh had

also been postponed over the weekend.

In Los Angeles, the Weinstein Co. canceled Tuesday's planned premiere of the violent movie "Django Unchained."

The TLC network postponed a Dec. 27 special, "Best Funeral Ever," about a colorful Dallas funeral home. The show, considered a pilot for a potential series, will instead air during the first week of January.

In one of the odder substitutions, NBC pulled a Blake Shelton holiday special at the last minute Friday and replaced it with one starring Michael Buble. That's because the Shelton special had an animated segment about a reindeer killing, which NBC would be removed from any future



English Soccer player David Beckham, center, laughs with his sons Romeo, right, and Cruz, left, as they watch an NBA basketball game between the Los Angeles Lakers and Phoenix Suns, in this file photo dated Friday, Nov. 16, 2012, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

10-year-old Beckham new face of Burberry

LONDON (AP) — Burberry has decided to brand it like Beckham.

The London-based fashion house says Romeo Beckham — aged 10 — is a new face of the clothing brand. The son of soccer star David Beckham and former Spice Girl Victoria Beckham features in ads for Burberry's spring/summer 2013 collection. Beckham wears one of Burberry's signature trench coats in the campaign, which also features models

including Cara Delevigne, Edie Campbell and Alex Dunstan.

Burberry chief creative officer Christopher Bailey said Romeo had been "a joy to work with and really stole the show" at the photo shoot. Last week, Romeo Beckham, his brothers Brooklyn and Cruz and father David all wore Burberry as they attended the premiere of the Spice Girls musical "Viva Forever!" in London. □



In this publicity film image released by Universal Pictures, Mark Wahlberg, left, Kate Beckinsale and Connor Hill are shown in a scene from "Contraband."

Associated Press

showings of the special. It's a ritual for entertainment companies in the wake of national tragedies, noted Chris Ender, CBS Entertainment spokesman: The network's series and promos are all looked at

carefully with an eye toward whether any of them could be considered insensitive with the news still fresh in mind. CBS has made no changes other than doing two prime-time news specials, he said. □

Posen filling Kors' 'Project Runway' seat

SAMANTHA CRITCHELL

AP Fashion Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Zac Posen will be the new featured judge on "Project Runway," filling the chair Michael Kors sat in for the show's first 10 seasons. Posen called the role "an amazing opportunity" and said he hoped to give a new perspective to the competing designers. Kors isn't "out" — as host Heidi Klum likes to say to contestants who get kicked off the fashion reality TV show. His schedule didn't allow a commitment, but he will come back as a guest judge for the season finale, according to a statement for Lifetime TV. Another twist to the revamped "Project Runway"



In this Nov. 14, 2011 file photo, designer Zac Posen attends the CFDA / Vogue Fashion Fund Awards in New York.

Associated Press

is that contestants compete as teams instead of individuals.

The "Project Runway" season starts Jan. 24. □

Dominique Strauss-Kahn drama hits the French stage



In this Nov. 15, 2012 file photo, French actor Eric Debrosse acting as former International Monetary Fund leader Dominique Strauss-Kahn, left, and actress Jelle Saminnadin acting as Nafissatou Diallo, the hotel housekeeper, who accused Dominique Strauss-Kahn of sexually assaulting her, pose during a photo opportunity as they perform in a play "Suite 2806" in a Paris theatre.

Associated Press

'Scarface' actor arrested on suspended license

MIAMI (AP) — "Scarface" actor Steven Bauer has been arrested in the Miami area, accused of driving with a suspended license. The 52-year-old Bauer's real name is Steven Ernest Echevarria and he was booked into the Miami-Dade County Jail early Tuesday morning. It was not immediately known if he has an attorney. His arrest report shows Bauer was stopped in Sweetwater for an improper left turn late Monday night. He was given a warning, but the officer ran his driver's license and found an open 12-year-old warrant. Bauer played Manny Ribera in the 1983 movie "Scarface" starring Al Pacino. Bauer also starred on



In this arrest photograph made available by the Miami Beach Police dept., shows actor Steven Ernest Echevarria on Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2012.

Associated Press

the bilingual PBS show "Qué Pasa, USA." He played the teenage son of a Cuban exile family in Miami from 1977 to 1979. □

THOMAS ADAMSON

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The calamitous moments inside the New York hotel that cost Dominique Strauss-Kahn his career, his dignity and possibly even his wife have now been turned into theater. Some say bad theater. It's been over 18 months since the former International Monetary Fund chief faced sexual assault charges brought by New York hotel maid Nafissatou Diallo. Those charges have since been dropped. Now a play in Paris titled "Suite 2806" — the number of Strauss-Kahn's Sofitel hotel room — asks, "What might have happened?"

But a year and a half is a long time. What was once a salacious story that provoked fascination on both sides of the Atlantic with its mix of sex, money and power has somehow ended up as a drama that's dull as dishwater.

The play — panned by critics — has been struggling to fill seats since its premiere last month despite substantial press coverage. That begs the question: Is the French public finally los-

ing its appetite for tabloid tales about the man known here as DSK?

"We've read about this DSK thing so much, what else can be said that's new? It was boring," said theatergoer Alexey Loginov, 22, who admitted to falling asleep during the play.

"The sordid story remains sordid," said Eric Dimicoli, 42, another viewer.

Set in a reconstructed Sofitel room with a signature gold mustard decor, the play, according to director Philippe Hersen, is a 60-minute "study of morality, sexual addiction, and power with money," between a DSK-type character named Daniel Weissberg and a black housekeeper named Evangeline.

The actors' resemblance to their respective characters is compelling. Eric Debrosse, as Strauss-Kahn, got immediate applause for his white bleached hair, Quasimodo-esque back and pot-belly — apparently thanks to a strict junk food diet that helped him gain over 13 pounds.

But the play's lackluster repartee and endless facile moralizing — highlighted by lines like "It's in the nature

of things: Men dominate women" and "Prostitution is the essence of a woman" — can disappoint viewers. Perhaps its most frustrating aspect is that — probably for legal reasons — the play does not take sides. The house maid as well as the DSK-character come across as manipulative, and it's not clear whom to believe. In reality, the criminal case brought by Guinean-born housekeeper Diallo was dropped after prosecutors said they couldn't trust her. Among their concerns: She was inconsistent about her actions right after leaving his suite, and she told a compelling but false story of having been raped previously. In truth, no one apart from the two parties concerned will ever really know what exactly happened in that now-infamous suite 2806. After seemingly endless speculation, many in France, not the least Strauss-Kahn and his now-estranged wife, journalist Anne Sinclair, just want to move on.

Strauss-Kahn will find out on Wednesday if his demand to have charges of aggravated pimping in a case in France thrown out. □

Ex-pop star Frankie Valens becomes pastor

SYRACUSE, Kansas (AP) — Pop star of the 1960s and 70s Frankie Valens has a new gig — as a preacher at a small church in the U.S. The Garden City Telegram reports that the singer, who had hits with "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," became

the pastor of First Christian Church in Kansas about a month ago. Valens' father led the same church in 1978 and 1979. The 70-year-old Valens says he's never preached from a pulpit but says he's been testifying about his faith for years. □

Another Boom Year



GAIL COLLINS

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It appears that a lot of people believe the world will come to an end next Friday, possibly during a zombie apocalypse.

Now that I have your attention, let's proceed with a discussion of how various accounting principles are influencing congressional negotiations over the "fiscal cliff."

Just kidding! We are going to talk about the end of the world and the zombie apocalypse. Honestly, this is a big deal. The Web, which always knows what is really important, is full of it. Panic buying has popped up in Russia. At an anti-terrorism summit meeting in San Diego this year, law enforcement officials got to see a demonstration on what to do in the event that Southern California is taken over by zombies.

Also, there have been quite a few recent developments that might well be interpreted as a sign of the end of days:

— The 5,125-year-long Mayan calendar stops on Dec. 21.

— Scientists report the discovery of an elephant that speaks Korean.

— Rick Perry says he might be considering another run for president. All right, the elephant has a very limited vocabulary. But ever since the world failed to come to an end in 2000, apocalypse aficionados have been looking at December 2012 because of the Mayan calendar thing. I believe the zombies were added on simply because, right now, zombies are really popular. There's a high-rated zombie TV series, "The Walking Dead," a whole bunch of best-selling zombie graphic novels, and an upcoming Brad Pitt movie, "World War Z."

The movie isn't being released until June, which suggests that Brad Pitt doesn't have much faith in the Mayans.

What is it about zombies that everybody likes so much? As villains, they aren't particularly well-rounded. They don't plan, so the plot options are pretty limited. You can't develop a forbidden relationship with one. You don't see a handsome male zombie fall in love with a teenage human and then announce that sex is out of the question because of the threat of neck-biting and, therefore, all he wants to do is cuddle and talk about feelings.

That actually may be the key.

Zombies never want to talk about feelings. I'll bet nine-tenths of the world's zombie fans are guys.

These days, if you want to sell something, you add zombies. If you've got a supply of pup tents you can't get rid of, re-label them "zombie survival shelters" and they'll fly out the door. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have been trying to get people interested in emergency readiness by repositioning the advice as "Preparedness 101: Zombie Apocalypse." Organizers of that counterterrorism summit meeting in San Diego said they featured a section on zombie fighting to brighten up an otherwise pretty grim five days of meetings on homeland security. Zombies. Always the life of the party.

People do love a good apocalypse. The National Geographic Channel feels it's got a big hit in "Doomsday Preppers," which is sort of a "Project Runway" for people with fallout shelters.

Every week, "Doomsday Preppers" visits folks who are getting ready for a cataclysm — terrorists, earthquakes, the collapse of the Greenland ice sheet, nuclear war. The program is sponsored by a brand of "gourmet emergency food" and it features a team of experts who grade this week's survivalists on their preparations. "Your score is 63 out of 100; you have 10 months' initial survival time," they told a guy who was making weapons and growing algae to feed his five children in case of a collapse of the world financial system.

Scientists at NASA have taken the whole end-of-the-world thing seriously enough to post answers to a list of Frequently Asked Questions, beginning with the biggie. ("The world will not end in 2012.") The Mayan calendar, NASA says, just ends like the one on your desk. Also, as long as they have your attention, they want you to know that there is no planet named Nibiru hurtling to Earth and that "a reversal in the rotation of Earth is impossible." Just in case you were worrying. Toward the end of its Q-and-A, NASA takes up the issue of whether Earth will be hit by a meteor in 2012, assuring readers: "We have already determined that there are no threatening asteroids as large as the one that killed the dinosaurs."

My bar for comfort on the threatening-asteroid issue is way lower than the dinosaur extinction level. NASA is sounding a little like Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev of Russia, who told his nation that he didn't believe in the whole end-of-the-world scare, then added: "At least, not this year."

Scientists, if the topic is potential cosmic calamities, think about your bedside manner. When discussing life-extinguishing meteors or planet-eating black holes, never say "highly unlikely." Remember, you are talking to a nation of people who kept buying Powerball tickets even after the odds passed 1 in 175 million. □



It's A Smart, Smart, Smart World



NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

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Before I get to the dreary budget debates in Washington, here's a bright spot of good news: We're getting smarter.

My readers are all above average. But if I ever had average readers, they would still be brilliant compared with Americans of a century ago.

The average American in the year 1900 had an IQ that by today's standards would measure about 67. Since the traditional definition of mental retardation was an IQ of less than 70, that leads to the remarkable conclusion that a majority of Americans a century ago would count today as intellectually disabled.

The trend of rising intelligence is known as the "Flynn Effect," named for James R. Flynn, the New Zealand scholar who pioneered this area of research. Countless other scholars worldwide have replicated his findings, and it is now accepted science — although there is still disagreement about its causes and significance. The average American IQ has been rising steadily by 3 points a decade. Spaniards gained 19 points over 28 years, and the Dutch 20 points over 30 years. Kenyan children gained nearly 1 point a year.

Those figures come from a new book by Flynn from Cambridge University Press called "Are We Getting Smarter?" It's an uplift-

ing tale, a reminder that human capacity is on the upswing. The implication is that there are potential Einsteins now working as subsistence farmers in Congo or dropping out of high school in Mississippi who, with help, could become actual Einsteins.

The Flynn Effect should upend some of the smugness among those who have historically done well in global IQ standings. For example, while there is still a race gap, black Americans are catching up — and now do significantly better than white Americans of the "greatest generation" did in the 1940s.

Another problem for racists: The country that tops the IQ charts isn't America or in Europe. It's Singapore, at 108. (The reason may have to do with Singapore's Confucian respect for learning and its outstanding school system.)

None of this means that people today are born smarter. While IQ measures something to do with mental acuity, it's a rubbery and imperfect metric. It's heavily shaped by environment — potential is diminished when children suffer from parasites or lead in air pollution. As a result, the removal of lead from gasoline may have added 6 points to the IQ of American children, according to Dr. Philip Landrigan, a pediatrician and epidemiologist at Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Flynn argues that IQ is rising because in industrialized societies we give our brains a constant mental workout that builds up what we might call our brain sinews.

"The brains of the best and most experienced London taxi drivers," Flynn writes, citing a 2000 study, have "enlarged hippocampi, which is the brain area used for navigating three-dimensional space." In a similar way, he argues, modern life gives our brains greater exercise than when we were mostly living on isolated farms.

It's not that our ancestors were dummies, and I confess to doubts about the Flynn Effect when I con-

template the slide from Shakespeare to "Fifty Shades of Grey." Likewise, politics does not seem to benefit: One academic study found a deterioration in the caliber of discussions of economics in presidential debates from 1960 to 2008.

But Flynn argues that modern TV shows and other entertainment can be cognitively demanding, and video games like those of the Grand Theft Auto series probably require more thought than solitaire. (No, don't call the police. My teenage kids are not holding me hostage and forcing me to write this paragraph.)

Back to the debates in Washington. To me, the lesson from this research is the vast amount of human potential globally that is available if we can nurture and stimulate kids who now get neglected.

One challenge is to preserve foreign aid. Some 61 million children around the world still don't attend even primary school, and President Barack Obama in his 2008 campaign was right to propose a global education fund, in part as an alternative to extremist religious schools.

I'm hoping the idea doesn't get dropped forever.

The even greater challenge is nation-building at home at a time when funding for schools is being slashed, about 7,000 high school students drop out every day, and there are long waits to get into early-childhood-enrichment programs like Head Start.

Literacy programs can help break cycles of poverty and unleash America's potential — and a single F-35 fighter could pay for more than four years of the Reading Is Fundamental program in the entire United States.

As we make hard budget choices, let's remember that the essential fact of the world is that talent is universal and opportunity is not. I hope we're finally smart enough to try to remedy that.

Contact Kristof at Facebook.com/Kristof, Twitter.com/NickKristof or by mail at The New York Times, 620 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10018. □

Toys for Tots

Christmas
is the season
of sharing and giving.

As has been the custom of Aruba Today and Bon Dia Aruba since 2003, we are again collecting toys, books, clothing for boys and girls, non-perishable food, etc. for Casa Cuna Children's House, Imeldahof and The Food Bank of Aruba.

Let's make this a Merry and Joyful Christmas for everyone on our island, as it's an opportunity for us all to show solidarity and our love to others. You too can be part of this program by bringing your gift to our office located at the Weststraat #22 in Oranjestad.

Financial contributions are also possible.
Help us make this Christmas a very special one for our children and families all in Aruba.
Toys for Tots thanks each and everyone of you for helping us helping others.

THANK YOU!!

*Thank
You*

BON DIA *Aruba*